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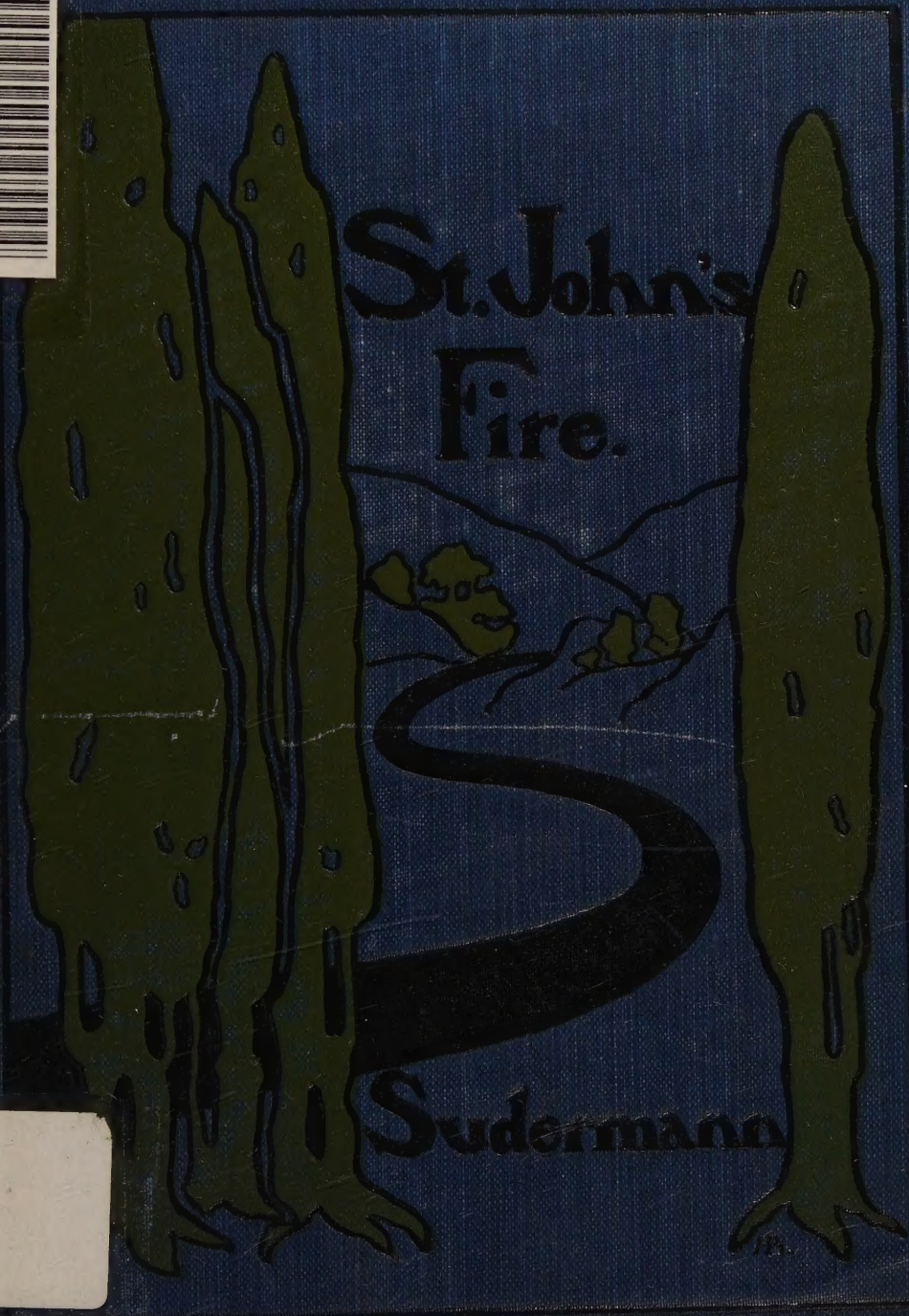

THE UNION

ST. JOHN'S FIRE

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HERMANN SUDERMANN

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ST. JOHN'S FIRE

CHARACTERS.

VOGELREUTER, *a well-to-do farmer.*

MRS. VOGELREUTER, *his wife.*

TRUDE, *their daughter.*

GEORG VON HARTWIG, *a contractor, Vogelreuter's nephew.*

MARIKKE, *called Heimchen ("Little-stay-at-home"), adopted daughter in Vogelreuter's household.*

THE WESZKALNENE.

HAFFKE, *assistant pastor.*

PLÖTZ, *overseer on Vogelreuter's farm.*

MAMSELL.

A SERVANT MAID.

The action is laid toward the end of the '80's, on Vogelreuter's estate in Prussian Lithuania.

ACT I.

[*A conservatory in the farm house. The back wall is seen through three broad glass doors which are separated from each other by small columns. Behind this is a terrace covered by an awning, from which steps lead down into the garden. At the right and left, doors. In the center of the room, a long dining table spread for breakfast. At the left in the foreground, a sofa, sofa table and chairs. At the right, a sewing machine and beside it a basket containing pieces of a trousseau. There are old fashioned copper etchings and family portraits on the walls. The furnishings are simple but comfortable. It is shortly after daybreak.*]

(TRUDE *is busied about the breakfast table.* VOGELREUTER *comes in with* PLÖTZ *from the right.*)

VOGELREUTER. Hm! The devil's getting in his work early today. (*Throws off his cap.*) Morning, Trude!

TRUDE. (*Happily.*) Morning, Papa, dear!

VOGELREUTER. A pretty mess, this! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Plötz! When it happened before out on the meadow—but now right in the stall! The devil!

TRUDE. What's the matter, Papa?

VOGELREUTER. Cow's overeaten herself. It's easy to see that Heimchen isn't here. Nothing of this sort hap-

pens when *she* tends to the milking in the morning. Well, what excuse have you got to offer for yourself, Man?

PLÖTZ. Nothing, Mr. Vogelreiter.

VOGELREUTER. Well, there's some sense in that at any rate. Here, have a cigar. And see that you get out and send for the veterinarian. (*After a pause.*) Do you want some coffee?

PLÖTZ. I've had my breakfast already, Mr. Vogelreiter.

VOGELREUTER. Then what may you have followed me in here for?

PLÖTZ. I—I wanted to excuse myself, Mr. Vogelreiter.

VOGELREUTER. Oh, you've got a brilliant eloquence in that line—you fool.—Morning!

PLÖTZ. (*Hesitatingly.*) Good morning. (*He remains standing there.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well, what next?

PLÖTZ. W-Why, I had another little message for you, Mr. Vogelreiter.

VOGELREUTER. Out with it, then.

PLÖTZ. (*With a glance at Trude.*) But—

VOGELREUTER. Say, Trude, go out and see what the weather's like.

TRUDE. All right, Papa, dear. (*She goes out onto the terrace.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well?

PLÖTZ. (*In a low tone.*) The old Weszkalnene's been seen again.

VOGELREUTER. (*With a start.*) Heh?—Well, that is a pretty business —ta-ta-ta!—Who saw her?

PLÖTZ. She was down at the village begging; and then she's been about here besides,—she was mousing 'round back of the sheds some half dozen times.

VOGELREUTER. So? (*He scratches his head.*) Well, well, well. If I can once get the sly old toad jailed, she'll be cleared out of our way for a few years.—Well, so she's back again!—What does she want this time?

PLÖTZ. She said she heard her daughter was going to get married—

VOGELREUTER. (*Interrupting.*)— Hers! Oh ho! So she—(*He breaks off with a laugh.*) And then?

PLÖTZ. And so she's come to fetch herself a bit of the wedding cake, so she said.—But she hasn't trusted herself in the yard yet.

VOGELREUTER. She can thank her stars for that! All you've got to do, Plötz, is to watch out that she doesn't get near to anyone in the house. Anyone. Do you understand? I'll just speak to the police. Perhaps we'll run across her again. Well, good morning.

PLÖTZ. Morning, Mr. Vogelreiter.

(PLÖTZ *goes out.* TRUDE *comes in from the terrace.*)

TRUDE. Can I pour you out some coffee, Papa dear?

VOGELREUTER. Oh ho, so you're looking after the breakfast this morning, Frousie! Can you do that?

TRUDE. Why, Papa, as if I couldn't always do that.

VOGELREUTER. Well, well. Heimchen usually tends to it anyway.

TRUDE. (*Continuing.*) Yes, just as well as Heimchen. —But you must be patient.

VOGELREUTER. You sweet little rogue, you! How many more days do I have you now?

TRUDE. Four more, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. You rascal! *Must* you get married now? Must you—heh?

TRUDE. But Papa dear, you set the day yourself.

VOGELREUTER. Oh yes. But what is a poor old fellow like me to do?—Hasn't the lover come down yet?

(*Trude shakes her head.*)

VOGELREUTER. Such a piece! To sleep, sleep, sleep!

TRUDE. He worked late last night, Papa. At two when it was beginning to get light, the lamp was still burning in his room.

VOGELREUTER. Industrious, is he? If he only wasn't such a stubborn piece.—Mama hasn't come down yet either?

TRUDE. No.

VOGELREUTER. Has Heimchen come home?

TRUDE. Yes, on the early train.

VOGELREUTER. And how about the little hushie-kushie nest for the two lovers; isn't that pretty near done—heh?

TRUDE. She has to go to Königsberg once more, I believe. And then it will be ready.

VOGELREUTER. And is it going to be cozy and nice—heh?

TRUDE. I don't know, Papa. They don't breathe a word to me about it. It's all to be a surprise. But then I'm sure it will be wonderfully, wonderfully nice.

VOGELREUTER. And you're happy, Frousie, heh?

TRUDE. Oh Papa, dear, I'm sure I don't deserve to be so happy.

VOGELREUTER. When you bring your poor old father hard boiled eggs to eat, you don't deserve it, for a fact.

TRUDE. (*Alarmed.*) Oh excuse me. I'll go right out—

VOGELREUTER. Never mind. Never mind. Heimchen's getting enough sleep, I s'pose,—heh?

TRUDE. If she only could. Oh Papa, tell her she has to. Nobody can stand the way Heimchen's working now. One day, she's here at the housework, and the next, she's arranging things in Königsberg, and nights, she sits several hours on the train. If she only doesn't get sick.

VOGELREUTER. Well, never mind, I'll—

(*Mrs. Vogelreuter comes in from the left.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Good morning.

VOGELREUTER. Morning, wife. Well?

TRUDE. (*Running to her and throwing her arms about her neck.*) Good morning, Mama dear.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Pressing her to her heart.*) My sweetheart! Oh dear, oh dear! Only four times more we'll say "good morning" to each other and then it's all over with.

TRUDE. But you'll soon come to visit us, Mama dear.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Ah, what is visiting? (*She weeps.*)

VOGELREUTER. Come, come, children, don't get stirred up too much. Feeling's poison on an empty stomach.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Who curled your hair last night, darling?

TRUDE. Mamsell.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. You can see at a glance that Heimchen didn't do it. Speaking of Heimchen, what do you think! A little while ago, I opened her door softly to see if she was asleep; there she sat, still dressed just

as she came from the train, and she had a book on her lap, and was looking up toward heaven with her eyes wide open.

VOGELREUTER. Well, what does that mean? Reading hasn't been a passion with her for a long time now.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. I keep thinking all the time we ought to look after her better.

VOGELREUTER. She doesn't need anyone to look after her; she's got backbone enough of her own; but what we *have* got to do is to spare her.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. But Henry. Spare her now? Four days before the wedding! How can anyone be spared now?

VOGELREUTER. Well, you know—Hm!

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Henry, I love the girl: you know that well enough. But, dear me, she's not like our own little sweetheart.

TRUDE. She's a good deal better than I am, Mama dear.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Now just see the modesty of that. Who'd have believed it?

TRUDE. Just imagine once, Mama, that *she* was getting married, and *I* was staying at home.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Then our sunshine would stay and our comfort and our—(*Examining the breakfast table.*) Dear me, to tell what we've got here is more than I can do.

TRUDE. Why, Mama?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Dear, it's all so—so—so—If Heimchen isn't asleep, she might just as well come down.

TRUDE. (*Petting her mother and laughing.*) See! Mama, you can't live a single meal without her.

(GEORG VON HARTWIG *comes in.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well, you sluggard, are you down at last?

GEORG. (*Extending his hand.*) Come, come, you must be easy on me, Uncle. Don't be in a hurry to disgrace me.

VOGELREUTER. You can call me Father too, pretty quick now, boy.

GEORG. Yes, right after the marriage.—Morning, Aunt! (*He kisses her hand.*) Well, my little one? (*He kisses Trude.*)

TRUDE. (*Clinging to him.*) My treasure! (*She bursts out laughing.*) Just look at him: he's got his whole back covered with hayseed.

GEORG. Well then, brush it off nice, little one.

VOGELREUTER. I suppose you'd rather sleep out on the haystack, these days?

GEORG. Heavens, sleep! Who can sleep? I've been walking about, since God knows when, up and down in the meadows. Such St. John's days—it's enough to drive a man mad. It seems as if there's no night at all now. Late last night, I sat by the window, thinking to myself, "Confound that nightingale; you can't go to sleep till he stops his racket." And all at once the thrush burst forth. And there it was morning. At the left there lay the red of evening, here at the right, the red of morning—both at the same time. "From flame and flame, a new day!"—Ah, I tell you, it's beautiful.—Give me some coffee.

VOGELREUTER. Say, do you expect to stay here now until the wedding.

GEORG. Why, naturally.

VOGELREUTER. Why naturally? Why is that taken for granted?

TRUDE. (*Begging.*) Oh, Papa, dear!

GEORG. It's all the same to me. Shut me outside the door if you like, and I'll go down and lodge with Prechtel at "The Sign of the Cup."

VOGELREUTER. Oh yes, and bring back fleas with you in the morning.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Why, Henry, shame!

VOGELREUTER. But it's true.

GEORG. Granted. The wedding was set for the twentieth. So I went to the Council and got a leave of absence for the nineteenth. It's my first leave of absence in the new place. For I can't be running about here and there and everywhere. But my wedding, bless you, it didn't come off.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. But George, dear, her things weren't ready, you know.

GEORG. And then besides, where could I have gone when I left here. I haven't a sign of a house yet. But then Heimchen's tending to that for me. By the way, has Heimchen come home?

(TRUDE *nods.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. You make such a wry face all of a sudden; what's the matter? Have you been quarreling with Heimchen?

GEORG. What an idea! Of course not. But I can't stand the idea of the girl's working herself to death for

me the way she is. Really I'd rather have stayed in Königsberg.

TRUDE. You! She isn't doing that for *your* pretty eyes; she's doing that for *my* pretty eyes.

GEORG. Don't be so vain, you little monkey.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Petting her.*) But George, dear, she *does* have pretty eyes.

GEORG. As it is proper that my bride should have.

VOGELREUTER. And don't you be so conceited. Do you understand?

GEORG. I'm not conceited, Uncle; I'm merely for facts.

VOGELREUTER. Well, since you're so much for facts, then, what's come over you, boy, to lay such a piece of trash on my writing desk?

GEORG. Uncle, don't begin the dispute again so early in the morning. Wait till later at least.

VOGELREUTER. All right. But what may that trash be?

GEORG. That is the balance of my account. I am a free man, and I'm celebrating it. I can support my wife out of my own earnings. So, you see, that's what it means.

VOGELREUTER. But what if I should tell you, you bighead,—

(MARIKKE *enters from the right.*)

MARIKKE. Excuse me, Papa,—(*To the others.*) Good morning.

TRUDE. (*Throwing her arms about her.*) Heimchen, my Heimchen!

MARIKKE. (*Kissing her.*) Darling! (*Then she goes to* VOGELREUTER *and kisses his hand.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well, so you're safe back home—Oh ho! Hold up your head. What's gotten into you? Hold up your head, I say. Did something happen to you, last night?

MARIKKE. (*Doubtfully.*) N-no.

VOGELREUTER. (*To* MRS. VOGELREUTER). Just look at her once. She's as yellow as saffron, as—

MRS. VOGELREUTER. What's the matter, child?

MARIKKE. Nothing, Mama. I just haven't had any sleep; that's all. I've been sitting in the car.

VOGELREUTER. And are you done at last with this confounded drudgery?

MARIKKE. I have to go *once more*—but, excuse me, Papa, the new assistant pastor is out there by the fence and—

VOGELREUTER. Who?

MARIKKE. The assistant pastor.

VOGELREUTER. (*To* TRUDE.) What are you giggling about?

TRUDE. (*Pulling at* MARIKKE'S *dress with barely suppressed giggles.*) I-I'm not—giggling—at all.

VOGELREUTER. And what does he want?

MARIKKE. He says he won't intrude on you so early. You'll have to go—

VOGELREUTER. Nonsense. Come in he shall.

MARIKKE. Yes, of course, Papa.

GEORG. Good morning, Heimchen.

MARIKKE. Good morning, George. (*She goes out.*)

VOGELREUTER. (*To Trude.*) If you keep up this sort of foolishness, it won't be long till you'll find yourself thrown into a corner without any wedding. Watch out.

TRUDE. Oh, dear, good Papa. I'm so ashamed of myself—and I'll never do it again. But it's so funny—he's gone heels over head in love with Heimchen—

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Now that you're a bride, my love, you mustn't say "heels over head in love" any more. That's the way hoydenish young girls talk. You must say—

GEORG. Made a fool of himself.

(TRUDE *bursts out laughing again.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Threateningly, to Georg.*) Shame on you!

VOGELREUTER. Sh!

(*Assistant pastor* HAFFKE *enters.* MARIKKE, *during the following conversation, is noiselessly removing the breakfast dishes.*)

HAFFKE. I wouldn't have thought of disturbing you so early in the morning, ladies and gentlemen,—

VOGELREUTER. Eight o'clock is not early in the country, Your Reverence; you'll soon find that out.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. How is Alterchen today?

HAFFKE. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) So-so.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. He's no worse, I hope?

HAFFKE. I always say, a man must have a care to getting old, but when he's once eighty, it's a pretty hard thing to get round.

VOGELREUTER. You are a philosopher. Won't you take something to drink?

HAFFKE. Thanks. With pleasure.

VOGELREUTER. Good! That was spoken like a man. (*Pours out for him.*)

HAFFKE. Thanks. Your health. (*They touch glasses with the little fingers extended.*)

VOGELREUTER. Won't you have some too, George?

GEORG. Thank you. Later on.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. How long have you been here now, Your Reverence?

HAFFKE. Three weeks.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. And do you like it?

HAFFKE. Why, I like it everywhere, you know. It's very beautiful everywhere. But here it seems still a little more beautiful. There's something else here, you know. Here there's not merely glitter, here there is (*with a look toward* MARIKKE) *light.*—Here there is not merely laughter, here are—*smiles.* (*Jumping up behind* MAIKKE.) Ah, my dear young lady, you have dropped a napkin. (*He picks it up and reaches it to her.*)

MARIKKE. (*Smiling.*) I thank you, Your Reverence. (*She goes out.*)

(TRUDE *is seized with a new fit of laughter and goes out behind her.*)

VOGELREUTER. Your Reverence will pardon her. She is still so childish.

HAFFKE. Don't let that worry you. She was quite right. I can't quite do away with my so-called gallantry yet. And how is a man to be gallant in such a long coat? It's impossible.

GEORG. Tell us, Your Reverence, how did it happen that you came here?

HAFFKE. Well, you see, that has to do with this coat too. To be brief, we were at the meeting of our Color-club, four of our old crowd, who were waiting there to be

freed from the sins of mankind; and I was the only one of the lot who found himself in so-called good circumstances. And with now the one and now the other having to appear before the Consistorium or something of that sort, my good coat soon got pretty threadbare with its many lendings. And besides, it hadn't an idea of fitting the others. So I said, "I'll tell you what, boys," says I, "we'll all go to the tailor now, and he shall cut us a coat on the diagonal that can hold its own between the lot of us." That's what we did. About four weeks ago now, along came one of our old fraternity brothers, who is second pastor at the Cathedral; he came to the Club-house and said to us candidates: "You holy men," says he, "come along now, all of you, and bring your dice box along with you. Over yonder there in Lithuania, there's an old man, who can't preach any longer; I've got to appoint a substitute for him. So out now with your dice!" But the others all declared in one voice:— "Haffke must have the place, for he has shared his black coat with us." And so now I have to be running about in it and am not, unfortunately, half so pious as I appear.

VOGELREUTER. Courage, courage! It will soon be over.

HAFFKE. Ah, but you mustn't think I'm not glad to wear it: that I'm not glad to be a minister. For do you see why? I'm so sorry for the most of mankind, you know. The heart in my body just aches for them. But I am sure it was even so with our Lord Jesus, and so I am glad to follow in his footsteps. Besides, my father wished it so, too. My father is a well-to-do farmer. There aren't such large estates in the lowlands, to be sure. But

he has (*impressively and at the same time compassionately*) much money. It's from my father I get my common way of speaking, too. I wouldn't be so well fitted for a court minister either, but I'm good enough for my farmers. But my gallantry, bless you, I can't quite do away with it!

VOGELREUTER. You are a good man. Do you want to stay here? Are you willing to take Alterchen's place?

HAFFKE. I should like to very much.

VOGELREUTER. You'll get my vote.

HAFFKE. Now let me see. Then I'd already have an office. (*Looking around.*) Now all that I lack is—well, what I came here for is this: Our Alterchen, you know, is no longer able to perform the ceremony for you.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Is that so!

VOGELREUTER. (*At the same time.*) That had occurred to me.

HAFFKE. Now comes the question: Have you got to send for some one else, or are you willing to intrust the matter to this young terrier?

VOGELREUTER. Your Reverence, if we hadn't heard you preach, then I would say, "No. You are too much of a stranger to us." But you spoke then with such earnestness and such warmth, that I believe—how is it, Christine?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Nods.*)

VOGELREUTER. And you, George?

GEORG. I don't know, perhaps I am mistaken, Your Reverence, but I believe there is a bond of sympathy between us.

HAFFKE. With me, unfortunately, that isn't saying much. With me everyone is uncommon sympathetic.

GEORG. At all events, I'm glad—

HAFFKE. Well, then just run out for a few minutes. I must now make all haste to find out a little bad about you.

GEORG. (*Extending his hand to him, with a laugh.*) Be easy on me.

(GEORG *goes out.*)

HAFFKE. May I note down a few points for my speech?

VOGELREUTER. Certainly.

HAFFKE. This gentleman, then, your nephew, he stands in an unusually close relationship to your family, does he not?

VOGELREUTER. You're right.

HAFFKE. How did that happen?

VOGELREUTER. Oh, as such things do happen. Here in East Prussia, in '67, we had that terrible famine year. Do you recollect?

HAFFKE. Very slightly. I was nothing but a boy then.

VOGELREUTER. It was terrible. Potatoes rotted in the ground; fodder was pulp; not a stalk of rye. We country folk, I tell you—whoo-oo! Well, my brother-in-law, my dead sister's husband—had his estate over there in Ragnitz—saw one day that he couldn't keep up his taxes any longer, and being the kind of a fellow he was, with his hifalutin notions of honor, he put a bullet through his head.

HAFFKE. Oh awful, awful, awful! Was your sister living at that time?

VOGELREUTER. Thank God, no. Well, and ever since then—

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HAFFKE. Pardon me for interrupting with a question that has nothing to do with the matter. I have heard that the people down in the village call your adopted daughter, Marikke, "the famine child." Perhaps that has something to do with that same famine year?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Why, haven't you heard about that, Your Reverence? You just ought to guess how we came by the child. Well, in that same terrible winter—(*To Vogelreuter.*) Don't; I was telling him first.—We were coming one evening from Heidelberg, my husband and I, where we had been organizing a soup kitchen. On the edge of the woods, there where it turns off the main road, you know, all of a sudden the horses shied. We looked down, and there, straight across the road lay a Lithuanian woman with a child on her breast, and she declared she'd let herself be run over and killed. So we loaded the woman into the sledge. What a sight she was!

VOGELREUTER. I tell you, Your Reverence, a good three-month after that we still kept finding something alive in that fur robe.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. And the little brat at first—oh dear! oh dear! But when we'd washed it and fed it, and laid it down nice in the white pillows, and when it smiled up at us with its little wizened face, my husband said: "Heaven has sent her to us, after all: perhaps she's to be our share of the general misery."

VOGELREUTER. As for Trude, she wasn't born yet, you know.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. She came three years later. Well, to go on, then we bought the child outright from

the drunken old woman and were glad enough when she was gone, for it smelled so much like Hoffman drops around her, it was more than we could stand.

VOGELREUTER. That's what the drunkards drink here instead of whiskey, you know.

HAFFKE. Dreadful! dreadful!

VOGELREUTER. But to come back to my nephew—

HAFFKE. Pardon just one more question. How did it go later with the mother?

VOGELREUTER. Well, that's the bad part of the story. And just to-day—

MRS. VOGELREUTER. What happened today?

VOGELREUTER. Heavens, nothing, nothing. Why, the old woman came back right away, and since we didn't want to show her the child, we gave her some money. Naturally the beast took good note of that and directly became a plague to the neighborhood.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. But, Henry, perhaps her motherly feeling —

VOGELREUTER. Very likely. And the pilfering, no doubt she did that from motherly feeling, too? At any rate, every time she honored us with a visit, there was something missing, until at last I put the police before the door. Well, then she was done for.

HAFFKE. And how about your adopted daughter? Does she have any presentiment? Does she know?

VOGELREUTER. We told her her mother was dead, but once she came across her face to face.

HAFFKE. When did that misfortune happen?

VOGELREUTER. On the day she was confirmed. Just as the girls were coming out of the church, we heard

screams. What was up? She'd been hiding by the path; and there she was, down on her knees, hugging her and kissing her hands and feet.

HAFFKE. (*Shuddering.*) Terrible!

VOGELREUTER. Naturally, I wasn't long in getting the child away and into the house. But we had to explain it to her some way. A drunken old woman, we said. Did she believe it or not? Well, she was pretty sick afterwards.

HAFFKE. And now, Mr. Vogelreuter, how is it now?

VOGELREUTER. You ask with a good deal of interest, Your Reverence.

(GEORG *appears at the middle door,* TRUDE *behind him, and later* MARIKKE *comes in.*)

GEORG. Well, are you about done with my warrant of arrest?

VOGELREUTER. Oh to be sure, we haven't even begun it yet. Some one else interested His Reverence a good deal more.

HAFFKE. (*Earnestly.*) You must not believe that, Mr. von Hartwig. But there are destinies which bear so dark an impress—(*He casts a glance toward* MARIKKE who *has just come in from the left with a bundle of sewing.*)

GEORG. (*Following his glance.*) You are right.

HAFFKE. If my friends will permit, I will call again to see about the speech.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Extending her hand to him.*) You know we are always glad to see you.

VOGELREUTER. And our regards to Alterchen. Along toward evening we will be over to see him as usual.

HAFFKE. Oh, by the way, I had entirely forgotten it;

Alterchen wanted me to ask you please, if you were going to bring him any more eggwine, to make it just a little sweeter. The last time it was too sour.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Oh, poor Alterchen!

HAFFKE. Don't say that, Mrs. Vogelreuter. When all our hopes and wishes have once more focused themselves on a bit of sugar, we're well over the mountain. Well, good day. (*To* MARIKKE). Good day, my dear young lady.

MARIKKE. (*Absent-mindedly.*) Good day.

(HAFFKE *goes out, preceded by* VOGELREUTER.)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*To Trude.*) Come, my love, don't feel so bad about it; no one will think any the worse of you.

TRUDE. Oh, but I'm so ashamed. When he came he was so happy, and now he looked all put out. He was certainly hurt.

GEORG. Not hurt. Only a little serious.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. On the whole, how do you like him, Heimchen?

MARIKKE. (*Who has been gathering up the pieces of sewing*). Who, Mama?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. The assistant pastor.

MARIKKE. Mercy, Mama, I've had my head so full of things these last few days, I haven't even had a chance to think about it.

TRUDE. (*To* GEORG, *aside.*) Now, *you* tell her once.

MARIKKE. Trude, how's the tulip-tree getting along? Have any flowers come out over night yet?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. What! Haven't you been out to see your favorite tulip-tree yet?

MARIKKE. I haven't had time, Mama.

TRUDE. Now, tell her. Tell her.

GEORG. Heimchen, you must not work yourself to death for us. Trude doesn't want you to, either. It's oppression for us to permit it. (MARIKKE *looks off into vacancy and sings in a low voice.*)

TRUDE. She didn't hear a single word; she's singing something.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. What are you singing there?

MARIKKE. Why, I wasn't singing.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Yes, you were, just now.

MARIKKE. Was I? I heard a song at the station in Insterburg last night—a Lithuanian song. A few Marjellans in the fourth class were singing it. It went so—yes, like this:

(*She sings.*)—

Zwirio czenay, zwirio tenay,
Kam' mano bernyczo.
Rid wid wil dai dai—
Ner mano bernyczo—

GEORG. And the Lithuanian, can you remember it so from just hearing it?

MARIKKE. Of course.

GEORG. Wherever did you learn it?

MARIKKE. Why, that's nothing. Why, I've always known that.

GEORG. Well, and what do the verses mean in German?

MARIKKE. In German? Oh, they don't mean anything much.

(*She sings.*) Here—no—

(*Begins again.*)—

Hither I looked, thither I looked;
Oh where may be my lover?
Rid wid wil dai dai,
Nowhere—is—my lover.

(VOGELREUTER *who has stepped in during the last words goes softly to Marikke and throws his arms around her from behind.* MARIKKE *screams.*)

VOGELREUTER. Come, come, patience my little Marjellan. Someone will come for you too—perhaps he is on the way now—well, what now? Don't carry on so.

MARIKKE. (*Who is clinging to him with tearless sobs.*) You—frightened—me—so.

VOGELREUTER. And when did you get so nervous?—What's the matter with you today anyway?—Did something happen to you?

MARIKKE. I told you already, no.

VOGELREUTER. But something did happen to you.—I say it plainly to your face. And now I insist, if you please, that you tell me the truth.—

MARIKKE. Well then, something did happen.

VOGELREUTER. What? Out with it.

MARIKKE. There was some one attacked me.

VOGELREUTER. Attack—where?

MARIKKE. It was not far from the yard.

VOGELREUTER. As you were coming from the station?

MARIKKE. Yes.

VOGELREUTER. Well, that beats all. Why, everybody knows you. Everyone knows that you're no gad-about.—What did he look like? Was he a laboring man or a gentleman?

MARIKKE. A—gentleman.

VOGELREUTER. What did he say to you?

MARIKKE. He did not *say* a word.

VOGELREUTER. Well, did he take hold of you, or try to take hold of you?

MARIKKE. No.

VOGELREUTER. I thought he attacked you.

MARIKKE. Attacked, yes.

VOGELREUTER. Well then, did he follow you?

MARIKKE. Yes.

VOGELREUTER. How far?

MARIKKE. As far as the gate. Then I opened it quick and he turned around there and went back.

VOGELREUTER. (*To Georg.*) What do you say to that?

(GEORG *shrugs his shoulders.*)

VOGELREUTER. There certainly *is* something very strange about the affair.—And that's what's upset you so?

MARIKKE. I'm—all right again now.

VOGELREUTER. (*Lifting up her chin.*) You don't look it.

TRUDE. Don't tease her, Papa dear.

VOGELREUTER. Now go get a good sleep for once.

MARIKKE. I can't yet, Papa. I have to talk with George, first—about the corner room. I don't know how I'm to set up the big bookcase.

VOGELREUTER. But you can see to that afterwards.

MARIKKE. No, or else I'd forget how the other things are arranged.

VOGELREUTER. Well, that's all I've got to say! (*To Mrs. Vogelreuter.*) I'm going out now to see about the cow; are you coming along?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Getting up and folding her sewing.*) Of course, I'm coming along.

VOGELREUTER. (*To Marikke.*) And one thing more, do you understand? For the next few days you're not to go outside the yard, unless someone's along. Not a step beyond the gate, is it understood?

TRUDE. But why not, Papa?

VOGELREUTER. When such a thing can happen? Besides, there's more than you—why, such a thing hasn't occurred in a life time.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. But, Henry, in broad daylight, it seems to me it's somewhat different.

VOGELREUTER. All the same—I have my reasons—besides, I'll tell you something else—

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Patting Marikke on the cheek as she passes her.*) And now go have a nice rest, my love.

(*Vogelreuter and Mrs. Vogelreuter go out.*)

MARIKKE. But you must go out now too, Trude, dear.

TRUDE. Why me?

MARIKKE. Why, you know, darling,—the furnishing.

TRUDE. Oh, that stupid furnishing. A wedding isn't Christmas.

GEORG. We'll be lucky, little one, if it turns out to be Christmas for us.

TRUDE. Well, if you want me to; but don't be too long. (*She goes out.*)

GEORG. What makes you so absorbed?

MARIKKE. O I—e——was just trying to think how the corner room looked.

GEORG. Heimchen, how good you are! How can we ever repay you?

MARIKKE. There's no need of that. I get my pay out of it as I go 'long. When I'm having the furniture set up, I am always sort of imagining to myself how it will be when you live there. There they will sit and drink tea, and there they will keep their twilight hours, I think—and that makes it very lovely. Yesterday I kept your twilight hour for you. But now, what I wanted to speak to you about, George: In the moving yesterday a piece of ill luck happened—the glass from the best room got cracked.

GEORG. Well, if only our friendship doesn't get cracked.

MARIKKE. But it surely won't!

GEORG. It shan't be placed to my account, Marikke.

MARIKKE. And surely not to mine.—And then I had the big mahogany book case polished up. Was that what you wanted?

GEORG. That suits me exactly.

MARIKKE. (*Hesitatingly.*) And then—there's—one thing more—I must say to you, George. Something important. When I was taking the things out of the bookcase, I found a blue notebook behind the books.

GEORG. (*Without showing interest.*) What sort of a notebook?

MARIKKE. George, you must not leave that lying around as soon as Trude is in the house. Not even behind the books, George.

GEORG. For heaven's sake, what sort of a notebook?

MARIKKE. I guess—there were—all sorts of poems in it—

GEORG. *You guess* there were—poems in it? That

notebook has been missing since last winter. I thought I had lost it on the way some time. Heimchen, be frank, of course you have read the notebook through?

MARIKKE. No.

GEORG. Then why do you say, I mustn't leave it lying around?

MARIKKE. The first one, I did read, and the second, I began. And then I thought, No this is better left alone.

GEORG. And you didn't browse around in it farther—not in the middle or anywhere?

MARIKKE. No.

GEORG. Can you swear to that, Heimchen?

MARIKKE. Yes, I can.

GEORG. Then swear.

MARIKKE. I swear. *Now* are you satisfied?

GEORG. Thank God! But you mustn't think, Heimchen, that there're things there that I'm ashamed of. My bit of scribbling has been far too sacred to me for that. But—four years ago, something came into my soul—that no one guesses and no one knows. And no one must know of it either.

MARIKKE. No one?—Not I, either?

GEORG. You?—No, not you, either. Where have you got the book?—Give it back to me.

MARIKKE. I buttoned it under my waist. (*She turns toward the back of the stage and draws the notebook from under her dress.*) Here it is.

GEORG. How shall I thank you, Heimchen? How can I ever thank you?

MARIKKE. Ah—you can do me a favor. Promise me that you will do it.

GEORG. If I can, certainly.

MARIKKE. George, I must explain something to you, first. I lied to Papa a little while ago when he questioned me. It was no man that stopped me last night; it was a Lithuanian woman—George, it was surely my mother.

GEORG. (*Confused.*) But Heimchen, I thought your mother was dead.

MARIKKE. Oh God, it is not true. None of you tell me the truth. That was my mother on the day I was confirmed; and again today it was the same woman. I would stake my life on it if it came to that.

GEORG. Tell me how it happened.

MARIKKE. I was walking along as still—it was already pretty light—and something crawled out of the ditch along by the road. I looked; there was an old beggar woman and she called out: "Marikke, Missie, my little daughter."—Then I turned all cold with horror and I began to run, and back of me I still kept hearing all the time, "Marikke, my little daughter." And now I have run away from my —own mother.

GEORG. Hm!

MARIKKE. And you know, dear George, that cannot be. I could never answer that charge. And now I beg of you, I beg of you; I must see her again; I must know what I am—and there Papa has forbidden me to go out of the yard—and besides, I'm—afraid, or else perhaps I'd do it anyway. And so I beg you, dear George, *you* look for her, please, *you* look for her. She must surely be somewhere round yet—in the village or at the station or along the road.

GEORG. Well, and then?

MARIKKE. Then bring her here—into the garden—or better still, right here—toward evening when Papa and Mama are gone over to Alterchen's.

GEORG. Heimchen, I cannot do that.

MARIKKE. I ask you *once* to do something for me, and then you say you cannot.

GEORG. See here, Heimchen. I know you're good to me—you weren't always so, and perhaps it is to be regretted; but if you had done a good deal more for me than you have, I cannot do it—without their knowing it, I cannot do it. For I do not know what would come of it.

MARIKKE. George, even a famine child like I am must know for once what it is to have a mother, though she is nothing more than a Lithuanian beggar woman. I must lay my head on her shoulder for once. I must cry once and be petted by her—

GEORG. Aren't you petted? Isn't Mama always good to you?

MARIKKE. Yes, but that is different; that is very, very different. I have never in my life felt as I do just now.

GEORG. Why just now?

MARIKKE. Because my heart is so—(*appealingly*) George!

GEORG. I don't know what would come of it. I can not.

MARIKKE. And so you are like that?

GEORG. Yes, I am like that.

MARIKKE. George!

GEORG. Hm?

MARIKKE. George, don't you have a thought any more for what you spoke of a little while ago, for what was in your soul four years ago?

GEORG. (*After a silence.*) Heimchen, then you *have* read the notebook through?

MARIKKE. Yes, I have read the notebook through.—Now will you do it?

GEORG. Heimchen, why have you perjured yourself?

MARIKKE. (*Shrugging her shoulders.*) Oh God!—Are you never going to do it?

GEORG. Very well, I will do it.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

[*The same scenery.*]

MAMSELL. (*Appearing at the door at the right.*) Can I come in, Miss Heimchen?

MARIKKE. (*Who is sitting at the sewing table with some sewing in her lap and is looking dreamily off into the garden.*) Oh, it's you, Mamsell? Come in. Yes.

MAMSELL. Oh, you're at work on Trude's underwear? Mercy me, mercy me, that *is* a dowry for you! Fit for a royal princess! Listen, Heimchen. Mama has given me the list for the wedding dinner. Now, as to the fish. I'm always for home-made things too, but carp's too common, you know.

MARIKKE. Why so? Why, I think carp is very nice.

MAMSELL. It's too common when little Trude gets married; when you get married, we'll have carp.

MARIKKE. (*Smiling.*) It'd be a pity to use even carp for me, Mamsell.

MAMSELL. No—no. We'll do what's right by you. I'll fix it up nice for you with a fine Polish sauce. You just wait and see. But our Trude must have sea-fish. You're to write to Königsberg for it, you know.

MARIKKE. All right: I'll ask Mama about it.

MAMSELL. You're not mad at me, are you?

MARIKKE. Oh no.

MAMSELL. For really, you're only a poor little Lithuanian waif.

MARIKKE. I know it, Mamsell.

MAMSELL. But we love you just the same. And the apple dumplings, we'll both help make those, won't we?

MARIKKE. Haven't you seen Mr. George?

MAMSELL. No—no. Listen, Heimchen! And I'll tell you something nice. That young candidate or minister or whatever he is, he's in love with you.

MARIKKE. Is he?

MAMSELL. He's going to propose to you.

MARIKKE. Indeed!

MAMSELL. You'll make your fortune yet, Heimchen. You'll be a St. John's bride yet. You just wait and see.—

MARIKKE. What's that?

MAMSELL. What's a St. John's bride? That I can tell you. In the new seal of Solomon, it stands written: Whoever gives or receives the betrothal kiss on St. John's night, he shall be fast sealed in that love until death. So it stands in the new seal of Solomon.

MARIKKE. Does it?

(*Trude comes in at the middle door with her hands behind her back.*)

TRUDE. Heimchen, I've got something for you.

MARIKKE. What is it?

TRUDE. Mamsell must go out first. Out. Out with you, Mamsell.

MAMSELL. I'm gone, my love, I'm gone. (*She goes out.*)

TRUDE. Shut your eyes.

(MARIKKE *does it.*)

TRUDE. (*Holding in front of her face a bush of orange-colored flowers similar to the tulip and with leaves something like those of the maple.*) What's that?

MARIKKE. The tulip-tree!—The first flowers from the tulip-tree. (*Burying her face in the bush.*) And so *it's* in bloom.

TRUDE. Well, are you happy now?

MARIKKE. I thank you, darling! I thank you, darling!

TRUDE. And who do you suppose fetched them down? George.

MARIKKE. For me?

TRUDE. Well, of course, for whom else? I tell you, it made me dizzy to see him hanging up there so high in the air.

MARIKKE. Think. He did that *for me.*

TRUDE. Why, you conceited thing! Why, he does a good deal more for me.

MARIKKE. Oh yes, for you.—And where is he *now?*

TRUDE. I don't know where he is now.

MARIKKE. Did he say he had to go out?

TRUDE. Yes, he said he was going out into the fields. That was quite a while ago now. I wanted to go with him, and begged and begged, but he wouldn't hear to it.

MARIKKE. Wouldn't he? (*She breathes hard.*)

TRUDE. He's away all the time today. Papa's asked for him several times already. And then he seems so—do you know, sometimes he's not nice to me.

MARIKKE. Child, dear, that cannot be true.

TRUDE. Then he has such a—if I didn't know that he loved me! And then there's another thing. I don't

know whether I ought to tell you or not. Yes, I will tell you. One's always so afraid, at least I am, that some one will take him away from me.

MARIKKE. (*Laughing.*) George—from you? Who might that be?

TRUDE. I don't know who. But sometimes, when he looks at me so—a little as though he loved me—and a little—sort of as if he pitied me a little—he *shall not* pity me. Why should he, when I'm so happy?

MARIKKE. Well, if you're happy.

TRUDE. But then, I can't keep from thinking, perhaps he really loves someone else, and only *acts* that way to me, because he's sorry for me—Oh, if I could know that!

MARIKKE. But, darling—

TRUDE. Don't! I'm not a child, any longer. How silly I acted this morning. I was awfully sorry for it afterwards. But it's such fun to laugh.

MARIKKE. And you shall laugh—always—always.

TRUDE. And then—you know—Mama thinks I don't love him right. I still love him like a child, she thinks.

MARIKKE. (*Absent-mindedly, with surprise.*) He'd be a pretty young father.

TRUDE. Oh, I don't mean that. But as children usually do love people, Mama thinks. And Mama thinks, just on general principles, I'm too young to get married. *Really,* Mama feels bad because I'm going away. But you'll be good to her, won't you, Heimchen? You'll be all she has pretty soon now.

MARIKKE. I—all Mama has?

TRUDE. Yes, of course.

MARIKKE. Whose all *I* am, I'll soon find out.

TRUDE. What do you mean by that?

MARIKKE. Here he comes.

(GEORG *enters through the middle door.*)

TRUDE. (*Running to him.*) My treasure! My treasure!

(MARIKKE *also takes a few quick steps toward him and then stops.*)

TRUDE. (*Shaking him.*) Ach! You son-of-a-gun!

GEORG. What! what!

TRUDE. Nothing. I only said son-of-a-gun.

GEORG. (*Tenderly*). Listen, Mousie, little one. Such things sound very well for Papa to say; but they won't do for you.

TRUDE. (*Pouting.*) You don't like anything I do. Everything Heimchen does pleases you. You can go marry Heimchen.

GEORG. Heimchen——does not want me.

MARIKKE. I thank you very much, George.

GEORG. What for?

MARIKKE. (*Lifting up the bush.*) For this, George—

GEORG. Oh, you're welcome, you're welcome, if that's all.

MARIKKE. Have you been out in the fields?

GEORG. Yes, I've been out in the fields too.

TRUDE. Papa's all out of patience with you; he's been looking everywhere for you. He wants to talk with you.

GEORG. Hm! Does he?—I know well enough—well!

MARIKKE. What direction did you go?

GEORG. Oh—everywhere.

MARIKKE. Did you find anything?

TRUDE. What should he find?

GEORG. Of course—yes—what should I find? Your

tulip-tree's a funny old fellow, girls,—he stands there like Saul among the prophets—all out of place.

TRUDE. Great-grandpapa brought it from South America with him.

GEORG. Is that why you care so much about it, Heimchen,—because it's such a stranger?

MARIKKE. (*Busied at her sewing.*) That may be it—

TRUDE. That's *not* it at all.

MARIKKE. Why, then?

TRUDE. Now I'll tell you the real reason. One time when she was in Königsberg with Papa, he took her to the opera. The opera was called "The Afrikanerin."

MARIKKE. (*Anxiously.*) Oh please, be still.

TRUDE. There's a poison tree that comes into that opera, isn't there?

GEORG. Yes.

TRUDE. It's called the manzanillo-tree, isn't it?

GEORG. Quite right.

TRUDE. And whoever touches the blossoms will die. And what do you suppose she was always making believe after that? And I along with her. We went out under the tulip-tree, touched the flowers that had fallen down, stretched ourselves out at full length—

GEORG. And then you were dead?

TRUDE. Yes, then we were dead.

MARIKKE. As you might imagine, George, that was a long time ago.

TRUDE. Dear, not so very long—four years, perhaps, since we died in agony.

MARIKKE. (*Casts a frightened glance at George, who returns it thoughtfully.*)

TRUDE. But now we're alive again.

GEORG. Well, thank God. Listen, little one, run out now and find Papa. Tell him I'm here now. Please, please!

TRUDE. If I've got to—Heimchen, are you going with me?

MARIKKE. I'd rather stay here.

TRUDE. I'd rather stay here, too.

GEORG. Be brave, little one.

(TRUDE *goes out, whining to herself.*)

MARIKKE. (*Eagerly, in a low tone.*) Did you find her?

(GEORG *nods.*)

MARIKKE. Is she coming? Say.

GEORG. Listen, Heimchen. When I gave you my promise this morning, I did not know whom it had to do with. I had never seen your—no, I'd rather not call her that—I had never seen the—Weszkalnene—that's what they call her, you know, until today—Heimchen, I can't bring that upon this house. It will not do.

MARIKKE. (*Anxiously.*) George!

GEORG. At least take Uncle into your confidence.

MARIKKE. No, no! No one but you. Only you!

GEORG. Tell me, just what do you want her for, anyway? You belong here. You have everything you can wish for here. You have love—you have—

MARIKKE. My bread also. Yes, I have that.

GEORG. I wasn't talking of that.

MARIKKE. But I was. And I earn it, too. I earn the little bit of love, too. I am the famine child. I won't take something for nothing.

GEORG. The devil has the upper hand of you today, Heimchen.

MARIKKE. I think he's always lurking in me.

GEORG. Heimchen, give this up. Some bad will come of it. We'll feel the consequences of it. Whatever is against nature avenges itself.

MARIKKE. That a child should cry for its mother,—is that against nature?

GEORG. That's not your mother. Your mother is here.

MARIKKE. Trude's mother is here—not mine. A mother must have a feeling how things are going with her child. She must have a presentiment how everything in one—

GEORG. Sh!

TRUDE. What secrets are you always talking about? Please, please, let me hear, too. You'll just tear the heart right out of me if you keep on with these secrets of yours.

MARIKKE. But, Trude, dear, it's—all—for you.

GEORG. (*Disapprovingly.*) Hm!

MARIKKE. (*Petting Trude, timidly aside to Georg.*) And—it's—for—you too.

(VOGELREUTER *comes in.*)

VOGELREUTER. So you're here at last are you? See here, boy, where have you been keeping yourself all day? It just about seems as if you'd been keeping out of my way.

GEORG. Why, Uncle!

VOGELREUTER. Listen, you there, have you tended to Alterchen's eggwine?

MARIKKE. Oh dear, no, I forgot it.

VOGELREUTER. Then go and get it ready. And put more sugar into it. You know how.

MARIKKE. All right, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. You can go help her, little Frousie. It's time you were learning to do something, too.

TRUDE. All right, Papa.

MARIKKE. But I don't believe you can take it with you, you and Mama—because it has to cool first. And that takes forever.

VOGELREUTER. Well, then, you can bring it afterwards.

MARIKKE. (*With a glance at Georg.*) Can't Trude do that? I've got so much to do.

TRUDE. No, not me.

VOGELREUTER. Yes, you. You're just the one. And see that you don't run away again like you did last time. Do you understand?

TRUDE. But, Papa, dear. Last time Alterchen wanted to hold my hand in his all the time. And his hand is so cold and so full of wrinkles, and the hairs stand out on it like this. (*She points with the finger of her right hand.*) It's just like a dead man's hand.

VOGELREUTER. My child, come here. *That* hairy hand baptized you once, do you understand? And when you were confirmed, *that* hairy hand was laid on your head.—And now do you grudge warming it up with your little child paws? Don't ever let me hear such a thing again.—A kiss.

(TRUDE *kisses him.*)

MARIKKE. (*Who meanwhile has approached Georg, in a low tone.*) Will you do it? Say.

VOGELREUTER. Come, out with you.

(TRUDE *and* MARIKKE *go out.*)

VOGELREUTER. Now we're both here, as the stork said to the angleworm.

GEORG. (*Who has been looking after the girls, turning around.*) All right; I'm ready. But as for being gobbled down, I won't agree to that. Take care, I'm not very digestible.

VOGELREUTER. That remains to be seen.

GEORG. What more do you want of me? I have a good position on the sewerage works, a ten years' contract with the Council, the direction of the Pension Bureau, and can become City Contractor—I'll enjoy the fruits of *my* labor, not of yours.

VOGELREUTER. Oh ho, will you?

GEORG. Yes, my dear Uncle, if you wanted to get off your dowry onto her husband, you ought to have looked up some bankrupt lieutenant. They're running about wholesale in the Royal Gardens, and don't even so much as once say "thank you."

VOGELREUTER. You've got the big-head so—

GEORG. (*Interrupting.*) Granted. And I've also got —I've got nothing but grit. Everything that I've accomplished in my life, I've accomplished through that.

VOGELREUTER. (*His pride cropping out.*) Well, a bit of industry too.

GEORG. That was grit as well.

VOGELREUTER. Are you very anxious to scrape up another row like the one we had twelve years ago?

GEORG. If it must be, let it come.

VOGELREUTER. Was that necessary then?

GEORG. You ask if it was necessary? I came in va-

cation time, an innocent youngster, fresh from the the first form. You declared, I must go out with you to supper. Now, see here; that luxury my conscience didn't allow me. Then you said: "Very well, if you don't obey me, I'll cut you out of your allowance." And I said *no* was my answer. And so it was settled. It's not such a joke, I assure you, to starve yourself through and through, but to-day I stand before you a free and independent man, for which I have to thank my consciousness of having, through thick and thin, always gone straight ahead, without concessions, without lies, without anyone being able to pull the wool over my eyes. And this consciousness is my most valuable possession. From it I derive all my strength. That I give to no one.

VOGELREUTER. Who wants it from you, I'd like to know?

GEORG. Yes, and one thing more. I belong to your family. Destiny determined that for me. And so the idea never entered my head of taking a wife from any other. So much do I feel myself a part of yours. But that was possible only because since that day, *inwardly,* mark you, *inwardly,* I was always free. You're a very good sort of a man, Uncle, but you have a hard fist. I don't choose to get behind it again. And so I take nothing more from you. Now nor ever.

VOGELREUTER. Oh ho, so you're afraid of me, are you?

GEORG. I—afraid—? Bah!

VOGELREUTER. And so, you're nothing but a coward.

GEORG. I warn you not to repeat that.

VOGELREUTER. You've got no warning to do in my house, you bully. I'm master here.

GEORG. Very well. So be it.

VOGELREUTER. It doesn't seem to please you to have yourself and your life held up to the light a bit. That's what's the matter.

GEORG. My life up to today lies open for everyone's inspection.

VOGELREUTER. But later, perhaps not—who can tell what's before you, what might happen over night?

GEORG. That is an insult that *I*—

VOGELREUTER. (*Planting himself stoutly before him.*) What then? Come on with you! That you what, then?

(MRS. VOGELREUTER *and* HEIMCHEN *come in.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Dressed to go out.*) What have you been doing to Trude, Henry? She's sitting up in her room crying.

VOGELREUTER. Is Alterchen's eggwine ready?

MARIKKE. It's cooked, but—

VOGELREUTER. Then just let her get over it: she can bring the wine along afterwards.

MARIKKE. Yes, Papa.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Can we go now, Henry?

VOGELREUTER. What do you want now?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Just to know if we can go.

VOGELREUTER. Sit down in the other room a minute; we've got something to tend to, we two.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. What's the matter with George? He's so—

VOGELREUTER. I've been making a fool of him. It doesn't seem to suit him.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Patting George.*) Just be patient for a little, George, dear. After a while, when she's yours, you can turn the laugh on us.

VOGELREUTER. (*Half to himself.*) We'll see about that.

(MRS. VOGELREUTER *goes out with* MARIKKE).

VOGELREUTER. No more of *that.* Or we'll be throwing manure bouquets at each other before long. But I've got one more hard hit yet for you, my son.

GEORG. I'm ready for it.

VOGELREUTER. My child loves you. You are her idol. So far as the marriage itself goes we're not going to meddle into that.—But e—say, what right have you got to be so proud, may I ask?

GEORG. I need your certificate for it, I suppose?—eh?

VOGELREUTER. And when I see you going around so, and always coming down heel first, it seems to me exactly as if your dead father was before me.

GEORG. (*With a start.*) What do you want with my father? He's been dead now this twenty year.

VOGELREUTER. That he left me the task of raising you, we'll not discuss, though it wouldn't be out of place for you to be a bit more careful about showing your teeth at me, but—e—

GEORG. You can do what you like with me, Uncle, but leave my father in peace; let him sleep.

VOGELREUTER. I suppose he can sleep in peace; I've tended to that for him.

GEORG. Do you mean by that—

VOGELREUTER. Well, who was it then that paid off his note when he lay dead?

GEORG. (*After a silence.*) Uncle, you should not have said that to me. (*He sinks into a chair and covers his face with his hands.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well, my boy,—(*He starts to speak, then walks up and down in silence.*) Look here!—(*He takes a cigar, starts to light it, crushes it and throws it away*).

GEORG. Uncle, you should not have said that.

VOGELREUTER. Heavens, boy, you knew it already.

GEORG. Yes, I knew it. And still you should not have said it. Not the second time. That time twelve years ago when we were quarreling, and you reached for the whip and I for the breadknife—

VOGELREUTER. Yes, I shouldn't have done *that.*

GEORG. No; neither you for the whip nor I for the knife. Then I got to hear it the first time. And that was exactly the reason why I took nothing more from you. Now you know it. Then I'd have scratched the gold out of the earth with my nails to throw it into your face. I hated you. Ugh! I had reason to hate you.

VOGELREUTER. Merely because I saved your father's reputation?

GEORG. But to use it afterward as a weapon to humiliate me, that wasn't fair in you.

VOGELREUTER. Well, my boy, a man takes what comes.

GEORG. Yes, even when it's a lashing. Well, I'm as soft as a piece of wash leather now. I realize it: it is true that I have no right to any pride. My father's disgrace shuts me out of that. Out with whatever you'll give me; I'll gather it in.

VOGELREUTER. Come, come. If that's the way you're going to talk, I've nothing more to say to you. The end of it will be that you'll begin to hate me again.

GEORG. Never mind, Uncle. That's past. I'll soon swallow it down. Well?

VOGELREUTER. George!

MARIKKE. (*At the door.*) Pardon me, Papa, Mama wanted me to ask you if you weren't ever going to be ready.

VOGELREUTER. So far as I'm concerned, we're ready now. (*Reaching for his cap.*) He's sort of scraping himself up a pile of misery. Give him a drink, Heimchen, to put the marrow into his bones again—(*He goes to the door, then turns back again.*) George!

GEORG. Uncle!

(VOGELREUTER *reaches out his hand.*)

GEORG. My hand I naturally can't refuse you. (*They shake hands.*)

VOGELREUTER. And I'll have the rest too, yet, you bighead, confound you. (VOGELREUTER *goes out.*)

MARIKKE. What has he done to you?

GEORG. Don't ask. Don't ask. (*He walks about the room.*) For *this* it's been pinch and shift with nothing but the one object; to be free, to be free. And now you've got to knuckle down again. If the child wasn't so blameless in it all, it would make a man clean disgusted with the whole business. Well—then into the yoke again.

MARIKKE. (*Timidly trying to comfort him.*) But the yoke is easy here, George. There's nothing but love in this house, I think.

GEORG. When did you get so pious again?

MARIKKE. I'm not pious.

GEORG. What was that you said a while ago? I am the famine child. That won't take something for nothing. —I am a famine child too; only I take everything for nothing.

MARIKKE. You—a famine child—you?

GEORG. Well, was I not gathered in exactly like you? Am I not a stranger in this house, exactly like you? Don't I smother under their goodness exactly like you?

MARIKKE. I am glad to take what I get.

GEORG. And you are glad to serve, too?

MARIKKE. I am glad to serve.

GEORG. But *I* want to rule, you see.

MARIKKE. And you *shall* rule.

GEORG. (*Scornfully*). Oh yes! (*He walks about.*)

MARIKKE. George!

GEORG. Heh?

MARIKKE. Pardon me; have you forgotten all about that,—about what you—about—

GEORG. Oh, that's so.

MARIKKE. I know I ought not to ask you. You have so many things on your mind. You weren't going to do it a little while ago.

GEORG. Now I will. Ha-ha—ha-ha. I'll go my own way! I'm not subject to any ideas of duty. I promised you and I'll do it. I'll do it right now.

MARIKKE. I thank you, George. Oh, how I thank you.

GEORG. You'd better not thank me.

MARIKKE. Where is she now?

GEORG. Down there behind the fence—in the garden—she's sitting out there.

MARIKKE. Oh God! Don't let her wait any longer. Bring her in—will you?

GEORG. Why, Trude's still here.

MARIKKE. I'll see that she goes, while you're out. When I come out onto the terrace, she's gone.

GEORG. Heimchen, in your own interest, I warn you this last time. Some misfortune or other will surely result from this.

MARIKKE. One misfortune more in the world doesn't matter.

GEORG. And so you are like *that.* Well, for once, I am, too.—Now, come what will. (*He takes up his hat and goes through the middle door.*)

MARIKKE. (*Opening the door at the left, calls.*) Trude! Trude dear! (*The banging of a door is heard.*)

TRUDE'S VOICE. (*Sounding as if she had been crying.*) What do you want?

MARIKKE. Come quick! Or Papa'll be angry. Come!

TRUDE'S VOICE. I'll be down in a minute. (*After a few seconds she appears at the door.*)

MARIKKE. Her nose is all red with crying. (*Caressing her.*) Who's been hurting your feelings, darling? Why are you crying so like your heart would break?

TRUDE. Where is George?

MARIKKE. (*Lightly.*) Oh, I suppose he's gone out into the fields again.

TRUDE. He did not tell me goodbye.

MARIKKE. He heard you were crying; and he didn't want to bother you—isn't that it?

TRUDE. What's the matter with your eyes? How queer your eyes are!

MARIKKE. They're the eyes the Lord made for me: I guess you'll have to be satisfied, dear.

TRUDE. (*Mistrustfully.*) Well, maybe. (*A knocking is heard at the left door.*)

MARIKKE. Come in.

A SERVANT MAID. (*Entering with a basket.*) Here's the wine for the old minister. And her're a few cookies, too. You mustn't break them, Mamsell said.

MARIKKE. All right.

(*The* SERVANT *goes out.*)

TRUDE. Well, good-bye, for a while, Heimchen.

MARIKKE. Good-bye, Trude, dear.

(TRUDE *picks up the basket and starts toward the middle door.*)

MARIKKE. (*Watching her anxiously.*) *Here!*—where are you going that way?

TRUDE. I'd rather go through the garden and over the field. Perhaps if I do, I'll meet George.

MARIKKE. But you daren't go over the field—alone. Papa has forbidden it.

TRUDE. But perhaps I'll meet George.

MARIKKE. And what if you don't meet him? No, no, I can't allow that. No, I can't allow it. I'm so afraid tonight.

TRUDE. Heimchen, do you really care for me?

MARIKKE. Darling! (*They embrace each other.*)

TRUDE. Well, then, I'll go this way. (*She goes again to the door and looks in every direction.*) Give my love to George.

MARIKKE. But I won't see him.

TRUDE. Won't you?—Perhaps you will, though.

MARIKKE. Then I will give him your love.

TRUDE. Well. (*She goes out by the door at the* right.)

(MARIKKE *hurries out onto the terrace and motions down into the garden, then she bolts the doors at the*

right and left, goes again to the middle door and comes slowly back, looking anxiously about her, leans against the wall and covers her face with her hands.)

GEORG. Heimchen, here she is! (*He withdraws to the terrace where he remains sitting with his back toward the house.*)

THE WESZKALNENE.* Missie, you're my little daughter —Missie—eh—Don't be afraid—no—You're a pretty Missie—eh—You've got a bridegroom—eh? Going to be married, so they say.

MARIKKE. (*Forcing herself to speak.*) No, I'm not to be married. That's Trude, my sister, who's to be married.

THE WESZKALNENE. Not going to be married? Never mind, never mind.—You'll get married. (*She feels of Marikke's dress.*) You've got a nice dress on—woolen; a nice woolen dress it is. (*Catching sight of Marikke's silk apron.*) Jesau! Silk apron! You've got a pretty silk apron—Look! Give me the apron—give it to me.

MARIKKE. (*Taking off the apron and giving it to her.*) There!

THE WESZKALNENE. Thanks, Missie, thanks! (*Kisses her sleeves and waist and tries to take her hand to kiss that, too.*) But let me have it.

MARIKKE. (*Anxiously drawing back her hand.*) No, you can't have that.

THE WESZKALNENE. Never mind, never mind.—You're a pretty Missie. (*Looking about her.*) Vogelreuter's not at home, is he?

The Weszkalnene's speeches are a conglomerate of East Prussian and Slavic, of a vulgarity of style of which it is impossible to give any adequate idea in English. The general effect might perhaps be approached on the stage by giving the vowels long sounds something as in the Scotch dialect.

MARIKKE. No, he is not at home.

THE WESZKALNENE. That's good, that's good.—He's a devil, Vogelreuter is. All Germans are devils.—But it's fine here in his house—Just like a king's. (*Takes hold of the cover on the table.*) Pretty woolen cover for the table.—Ah, Jesau! the pretty linen! The white linen! (*Pointing.*) There, my little love, there!

MARIKKE. (*Coming nearer.*) What do you want?

THE WESZKALNENE. Give me a sup. A weentie teentie sup, so! (*Indicates the amount with her thumb and forefinger.*)

MARIKKE. Yes, I'd be glad to do that.

(MARIKKE *goes to the liquor closet which hangs against the left wall, and takes down a bottle and a glass. In the meantime, the Weszkalnene stuffs a few pieces of the linens, which lie on the table near by, under her apron and holds her left hand fast down over her dress Meanwhile* MARIKKE *fills the glass.*)

THE WESZKALNENE. Thanks, Missie, you're a good little daughter, Missie! (*She drinks and runs her hand over her body several times.*) Good stuff. Give me another! (MARIKKE *pours out another glass full.*)

THE WESZKALNENE. Thanks! (*Drinks.*) Thanks—Now I must be going.—Eh, eh! (*She goes toward the background and drops a piece of the underwear.*)

MARIKKE. Moth—moth—what have you got there?

THE WESZKALNENE. Jesau! (*She picks the piece up.*) I found it out on the bleach. (*She sticks it under her arm.*)

MARIKKE. Let the linens alone; they don't belong to you.

THE WESZKALNENE. Never mind, never mind. (*Lays it down.*)

MARIKKE. Give me the rest that you have.

THE WESZKALNENE. I haven't any! Jesau! No.

MARIKKE. (*Hurrying to the door.*) George—George!

GEORG. (*Stepping in.*) Heimchen?

MARIKKE. Give me a piece of money.

GEORG. (*Gives her a gold piece.*)

MARIKKE. Here, take this, give me the linens back.

THE WESZKALNENE. Jesau! Little daughter. Ah, lit-daughter, gold! (*She takes the other pieces of underwear from under her apron and lays them on the table.*) There, my love, my little love.

MARIKKE. Go now! Go.

THE WESZKALNENE. Eh!—Little daughter. Yes, little daughter. Thanks. (*She throws her a kiss from the middle door as she goes out.*)

MARIKKE. (*Taking down the key from the keyboard and giving it to Georg.*) Here, take this, lock the garden door so she can't come back.

(THE WESZKALNENE *and* GEORG *go out.* MARIKKE *looks after them as they go out, then turns slowly back, leans on the table and stares into vacancy. A knock is heard.*)

MARIKKE. (*Calling, mechanically.*) Come in! (*The door is shaken.*)

VOICE OF THE SERVANT MAID. It's locked. (MARIKKE *goes and opens it.*)

THE SERVANT MAID. (*With a pile of plates.*) I've got to set the table for supper. Will you help me a bit with the table cloth, Missie?—What ails you? Can't you hear anything?

MARIKKE. Set them down, Lina, I'll do it myself.

THE SERVANT MAID. As you say, Missie! (*She sets the plates down and goes out.* MARIKKE *remains standing motionless again.*)

GEORG. (*Reentering.*) Well, well, Heimchen, this will have to be put through now. But come to yourself; this won't do—Heimchen, don't stare so. Better to cry—cry it out—

MARIKKE. Oh, George! (*She clings to him crying.*)

GEORG. (*Stroking her hair.*) Cry, cry, cry! I know how it hurts.—I've felt so, too.

MARIKKE. Oh George, now you know everything, now I have no one in the world but you.

GEORG. Yes, yes.—We both understand each other. We two—we belong together—don't we?

MARIKKE. Oh, God, yes.

GEORG. We will remember to-day. It has brought us to each other. It is the day before St. John's night. Will you remember it?

MARIKKE. (*After a short silence, freeing herself, timidly.*) Go away.

GEORG. (*Surprised.*) Why have I got to—go away—all of a sudden, Heimchen?

MARIKKE. Go away. I beg you, George. I—must set the table for supper. Go away.

GEORG. But, Heimchen, you said yourself you have no one but me. And you need someone.

MARIKKE. If you do not hate me, then go away. (*In a low tone.*) Go away.

GEORG. (*With an anxious laugh.*) Why should I hate you?—Well, then I will go away. (*He hesitates,*

turns 'round once more at the door and goes out. MARIKKE *falls in a heap, crying.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

[*The same scenery. Late in the evening. The hanging lamp burns over the centre table—another lamp on the table at the left. The glass doors are opened onto the garden. Moonlight trickles in.* VOGELREUTER, MRS. VOGELREUTER, *and* HAFFKE *sit around the table at the left.* TRUDE *and* GEORG *are at the center table.*]

VOGELREUTER. Well, where's Heimchen keeping herself all this time with the bowl?

HAFFKE. What? You're going to pass the bowl around, Mr. Vogelreuter?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Oh tonight's St. John's night, you know. The folks around burn their old tar barrels up, and we have our bowl of wine to drink.

VOGELREUTER. But maybe that's too paganish a feast for a high clergyman?

HAFFKE, That has nothing to do with the matter. If the clergymen are not consulted, it is paganish—

VOGELREUTER. (*Interrupting.*) And when the clergy do their share of the drinking, then it's Christian.

HAFFKE. I wasn't going to say that; you'll have to ask the Consistorium; they know all those things; they are so wise.

VOGELREUTER. You little slyboots, you!—Come, what are you about over there? You haven't peeped once tonight.

TRUDE. George is so lazy: I have to write all the dinnercards myself; and he's painting little men.

VOGELREUTER. You'd better be painting little women, George.

GEORG. Just as you say, my dear Uncle.

VOGELREUTER. The boy's in a tearful way, today. Come, be merry, children. It's St. John's night. And here comes the bowl.

(MARIKKE *comes in with a tray on which are a punch tureen and glasses.*)

VOGELREUTER. Come, speak up, Marjell; make yourself heard. Trude, help pass it 'round.

TRUDE. Yes, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. (*Drinking and drawing in his breath.*) Whoo—ooo—that's good. I tell you, Your Reverence, the man that's got that and has the seltzer water to go with it in his house, he's living on the top shelf.

TRUDE. (*With a glass, behind Georg, who has stepped to the right and is looking out.*) George dear,—George, don't you want any?

GEORG. (*Petting her, with a timid look at Marikke.*) Yes, my darling! Thank you, my darling.—Just look, friends, what a racket the moon's kicking up tonight! Everything's like silver, all woven in a white web. Oh, what a world it is!

MARIKKE. (*Anxiously.*) If the fires would only burn up now!

VOGELREUTER. Well! A word from you at last! I thought you'd lost your tongue over night. Come here, you little sheepshead. (*To the others.*) But first your health. Your health, all. His Reverence will give us a toast after little, a heathen toast.

HAFFKE. Well.

VOGELREUTER. (*To Marikke.*) Say, is that so, that you've got to go off to Königsberg again tonight?

MARIKKE. Yes, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. But I won't allow it, you see.

MARIKKE. Papa, I asked you a couple of weeks ago if I could go to Königsberg a few times to see about things and you said I could.

VOGELREUTER. But not in the night time, my little angel.

MARIKKE. But I have to go in the night. The workmen are all engaged by seven o'clock. If I don't go in the night, I can't get there in time.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Let her alone, Henry. It can't very well be otherwise.

VOGELREUTER. But just look at the girl.

MARIKKE. Why so? Why I'm all right.

VOGELREUTER. Laugh!

MARIKKE. (*Forcing herself to laugh.*) Ha-ha.

VOGELREUTER. Oh yes, fine. (*Imitating her with a woeful clatter.*) Ha-ha.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Come here, child! Bend over! (*She looks carefully at her and pets her.*) Did you sleep well, last night—hm?

MARIKKE. Yes, Mama.

VOGELREUTER. And what if the strange fellow should get after you again?

HAFFKE. Pardon me, *what* has happened?

VOGELREUTER. Oh nothing much. Nothing, nothing. —You want to go on the one o'clock train then?

MARIKKE. Yes, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. But there's another one at four; it's getting daylight then at least.

MARIKKE. But then, I'd get there too late.

VOGELREUTER. Well, then don't. You can stay up, too, George, and take Marikke to the train.

MARIKKE. (*In alarm.*) George?

GEORG. (*In alarm.*) I?

VOGELREUTER. What now? Why not?

HAFFKE. If it's not too bold in me, I would gladly put myself at your disposal.

VOGELREUTER. Never mind, Your Reverence. Your turn will come too in time. He's got to learn to be *some* good around the house.

TRUDE. And maybe I can go along with them, can I Papa? I love so to go out walking nights.

VOGELREUTER. You don't say. Oh I see, the way back —heh? No, my little Goldie, lovers can't be going around so late at night, unless they have a chaperone along.

MARIKKE. I'd rather go all alone, Papa. I'm not in the least afraid. I don't want to tire George all out; nor anyone else either. Really I don't.

VOGELREUTER. We weren't talking of anyone else. They all have to be up and about by three. (*To Georg.*) And what's your reason?

GEORG. Hm! An excellent reason! She doesn't *want* me with her. You just heard her say so yourself.

VOGELREUTER. You seem to be at outs with one another again.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. If they're both set against it, Henry, don't torment them.

VOGELREUTER. I'll have to make some inquiries from

Plötz first. (*Calling.*) Plötz!—Well, your health. (*He touches glasses with the assistant pastor.*)

(TRUDE *and* MARIKKE *run to the door and speak to someone outside.*)

A WOMAN'S VOICE. Mr. Plötz, Mr. Vogelreuter wants you.

PLÖTZ'S VOICE. All right, Mr. Vogelreiter. (*He enters.*)

VOGELREUTER. See here! Plötz. Give him a glass from the bowl, Heimchen. The man's so dry he fairly rattles.

PLÖTZ (*Bashfully.*) Why, I've just had a glass of beer to drink.

VOGELREUTER. From the Plötzian private cellar, heh?

PLÖTZ. No, no. Mamsell brought it out to me.

VOGELREUTER. Oh ho! You've been having a little drinking party with Mamsell—heh? A sort of insurance against dryness—heh?

PLÖTZ. Oh please, Mr. Vogelreiter. Don't put me to shame before the young ladies.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. He doesn't really mean anything by it, you know, Mr. Plötz.

PLÖTZ. (*To* MARIKKE *who brings him a glass.*) Thank you, Missie.

VOGELREUTER. (*In a low tone.*) Listen, Plötz! (*Aloud.*) Don't disturb yourselves friends. You can be thinking us out a good toast, Your Reverence. (*In a lower tone.*) Have you got any wind of the stranger yet?

PLÖTZ. Not a stitch of him, Mr. Vogelreiter. There were a couple of tramps at "The Sign of the Cup" two or

three days ago, but the police made quick work of them. Aside from that, there's not a strange louse in the whole town.

VOGELREUTER. If I only didn't have to count so much on the little Marjellan.—You, Heimchen, come here!

MARIKKE. (*Stepping in front of him.*) What do you want, Papa?

VOGELREUTER. (*Looking sharply at her.*) That's all. You can go again.

PLÖTZ. But while I was looking, I did see the old Weszkalnene again.

VOGELREUTER. Sh! Lower! Where?

PLÖTZ. She was sitting down at "The Sign of the Cup," and had money.

VOGELREUTER. Where's she stolen that?

PLÖTZ. Who knows? Prechtel said he saw her have a gold piece—You can reckon on it, Mr. Vogelreiter, she hasn't given up the pilfering. We'll soon get a hold of her.

VOGELREUTER. Does she sleep at "The Sign of the Cup"?

PLÖTZ. Yes, where? that's the question. She stays out by the road nights and when morning comes, there she is again, Prechtel said.

VOGELREUTER. Well, that's reason enough. George!

GEORG. Uncle?

VOGELREUTER. I've been considering the matter; you'll have to go with Heimchen, anyway.

GEORG. If you say so.

VOGELREUTER. And don't get to scratching each other's eyes out again.

MARIKKE. (*Without expression.*) No, no.

TRUDE. (*Who has gone out onto the terrace.*) There—there—look! The first one—it's burning! (*A red flame leaps up. Singsong and laughter are heard in the distance.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Have you looked to it, Plötz.—Is it far enough from the sheds?

PLÖTZ. Sure, Mrs. Vogelreiter.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. For last year the sparks flew clear up onto the straw thatch.

TRUDE. Yonder there, the second one! And out on the sandhill, another. Just look, George, how beautiful!

GEORG. I see, darling, I see!

TRUDE. (*Drawing him toward the front of the stage in a low tone.*) You call me *darling* all the time today. Why do you do that?

GEORG. Shall I not?

TRUDE. Oh always! Do you love me more today than usual?

GEORG. I always love you just the same.

TRUDE. (*In a low blissful tone.*) Before you have always said little one: today you always say darling.

VOGELREUTER. And now, my dear pastor, take the glass into your paws and let us have your toast.

HAFFKE. But I can't promise you that it will be very heathenish.

VOGELREUTER. Oh ho, old man, you're trying to get out of it. The Consistorium's stuck in your crop.

HAFFKE. Well, what a good Lithuanian crop it is! But now let us speak in earnest. Well, how shall I say it? I don't want to preach you a sermon.

VOGELREUTER. No, no, next Sunday.

HAFFKE. But, you see, when in such a summer night as tonight, we dream our dreams—can I say dream?

VOGELREUTER. Yes, you can say dream.

HAFFKE. For well nigh all of us do it whether we're young or old.

VOGELREUTER. Oh yes! It's a bad habit we all have.

HAFFKE. And then we become, you know, so broad, so clear of vision,—as if we could solve all riddles and unbind all wonders, and shape good from trifling commonplaces, and happiness from vain striving; yes, what is it then, what is it that stirs and works within us and—and ——? Why, always that same measure of love that was born in us and that fills our lives, and that—to be brief—that is our very life itself. Am I right?—And now I make a long leap. In the revelations of our Gospels, it stands written, God is love. Well, if God is this love—and it is a fine point of our religion to ascribe the best in us to our beloved Lord—how could I then tonight, when our hearts are so full, pass by his goodness? And therefore, Mr. Vogelreuter, no matter whether I am a clergyman or not—for worth must come from the heart, I take it, not from the dress—therefore I cannot put my full heart into any pagan toast.

VOGELREUTER. (*Pressing his hand.*) You have spoken well. Pardon me. I was merely joking anyway.

GEORG. No, not entirely, my dear Uncle. There I'll have to defend you against yourself. Such a religious man as you are, it was not mere rebellion in you a little while ago that you wanted to hear something paganish. And since the assistant pastor will not give the toast, I will give it myself. For you see, Your Reverence, a spark

of the heathen smoulders in us all. It has come down from old German times a thousand years ago. Once in the year it flames up high and then it is called—St. John's Fire. Once in the year there is a marriage night. Yes, a marriage night. Then the witches ride out on their broomsticks, those same broomsticks with which they are wont to work their spells, laughing high toward Blocksberg in the clouds—then the wild throng strides over the forest ways—then there awaken in our hearts the wild wishes that life has not fulfilled, and mark you well, can not fulfill. For no matter what we call that order which rules here in the world, through which the *one* wish may come to pass, through whose mercy we drag out our existence, a thousand others must perish wretchedly—some perhaps, because they were ever unattainable—the others, ah the others,—because we have let them slip away like wild birds, over which (*with a gesture*) our hands closed all too late.—However that may be, once in the year there is a marriage night, and the fire that burns then, do you know what it is? It is the ghost of our dead wishes, it is the red plumage of the birds of Paradise, that we might perhaps have nourished all our lives and that have flown away from us,—it is the old chaos,—it is the—it is the pagan in us. And be we ever so happy hereafter in daylight and restraint, tonight is St. John's night. My glass to your old heathen fires,—tonight let them flame high, and higher, and ever higher.—Does no one drink with me?

(*A silence.*)

MARIKKE. (*Trembling.*) I drink with you. (*They drink with their eyes fast fixed on each other.*)

TRUDE. (*Anxiously.*) And I too, George, dear.

GEORG. Yes, you too! (*He pets her tenderly and compassionately.*)

VOGELREUTER. What do you understand of that, you little sheepshead? I didn't understand it all myself, only got an idea of it. The gist of it's wicked.

HAFFKE. I trust, my dear Mr. von Hartwig, that God is watching over the pagan in you too. And therefore I am quite resigned to drink with you.

VOGELREUTER. Well, then, I am, too. (*They drink the toast. A fire flames up near at hand behind the trees. The cries and shouting sound nearer.*)

VOGELREUTER. What does *that* mean?

PLÖTZ. Lord! Now they *are* by the sheds.

VOGELREUTER. Didn't I tell you to look out for them, man?

PLÖTZ. I did look out for them, Mr. Vogelreiter. They had three old tar barrels; where they got the fourth is more than I know. I suppose they've stolen the wagon grease.

VOGELREUTER. Didn't you lock up the wagon grease?

PLÖTZ. Ach! It's a mighty little that helps on St. John's night, Mr. Vogelreiter. If they get a whiff of anything to burn, they'll dig their way into it. Why, if you should give them a fat ham tonight, they'd toss it into the fire.

VOGELREUTER. Oh, close up that fool nonsense, and go look after them. I'll come out myself in a minute.—Be off with you, quick.

PLÖTZ. Yes, Mr. Vogelreiter. (*He goes out.*)

VOGELREUTER. Such a lout! There's no putting any

trust in the fellow. My cap! (MARIKKE *gives it to him.*)

TRUDE. Can we go with you, Papa? Oh yes, please.

VOGELREUTER. (*To Mrs. Vogelreuter.*) Do you want to go, too?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Yes, I'd love to. And please, don't scold them. There's no wind tonight; nothing can happen.

VOGELREUTER. Won't hurt them any to dress them down a bit. Come on, Your Reverence. (TRUDE, GEORG, VOGELREUTER *and* MRS. VOGELREUTER *go out.*)

HAFFKE. And aren't you going, Miss Heimchen?

MARIKKE. Thank you, Your Reverence, I am not going with them.

HAFFKE. Then may I stay with you a little while?

VOICES OF THE OTHERS. Your Reverence! Your Reverence!

HAFFKE. (*Calling out.*) You go on; I'll come in a minute.—Well, may I?

MARIKKE. Certainly, if it's any pleasure to you.

HAFFKE. Pleasure is hardly the right word, Miss Heimchen. But what I was going to say was that it was right kind in you to speak to me of the little bridal poem. I got a great deal of pleasure out of writing it. Did you like it?

MARIKKE. Oh, very much, I thank you.

HAFFKE. Do you know it by heart?

MARIKKE. I think so.

HAFFKE. Won't you say it to me, I'll help you a little? "The flowers are the virgin's comrades"—well? "They twine themselves soft—through?—her fate." Well, how is it, won't you say it?

MARIKKE. No.

HAFFKE. You are so quiet today, Miss Heimchen. Is something worrying you?

MARIKKE. St. John's night worries me, Your Reverence.

HAFFKE. It will soon be over.

MARIKKE. Ah, if it were over now!

HAFFKE. You don't like to travel alone at night, I'm afraid.

MARIKKE. (*Indifferently.*) Oh—(*recollecting herself*) No, not very well. But that doesn't help matters any.

HAFFKE. Shall I go with you? I can scrape up some business in Königsberg, you know. That won't take a very long leave of absence. I'd like so well to attend the Color-club; otherwise one's apt to get so countrified, you know. And there's still time to ask Alterchen. I'll go right now to his room. No doubt he's awake.

MARIKKE. And tell Alterchen, please—that I'd been expecting each day to get over to see him for a little while; now I can't come over before the wedding. Will you tell him that? And that I love him, and in imagination kiss his hands. Will you tell him that?

HAFFKE. Certainly, certainly.—And how about my going along?

MARIKKE. No, no, Your Reverence, I thank you.

HAFFKE. Now let us speak frankly. I have been thinking of you the whole evening. I have been thinking of you longer than that. You appear in my thoughts like—what shall I say?—Like a little mouse before which the cat is sitting. You need a protector, Heimchen; you need someone whom you can trust.

MARIKKE. Perhaps Your Reverence might become my father confessor?

HAFFKE. Well, that's an institution we don't have—we Evangelicans. But if a frequent blessing would do—

MARIKKE. (*Smiling aside.*) Not frequent.

HAFFKE. You are right. Man must school himself to independence. He must learn to do for himself.

MARIKKE. And I do. I do, Your Reverence, I do.

HAFFKE. And still, dear Heimchen—I don't know why I should call you dear Heimchen—it wasn't a bit becoming in me, pardon me—I must speak frankly to you; you have some fear.

MARIKKE. Of the cat?

HAFFKE. If I knew of what!

MARIKKE. Oh, if *I* were the cat—and who else the mouse?

HAFFKE. That was very naughty in you.

MARIKKE. But can one not be the cat and the mouse at the same time?

HAFFKE. (*Thoughtfully.*) Yes, one can; but then he's playing with his own destruction.

MARIKKE. Who cares whether we're destroyed or not?

HAFFKE. Heimchen, dear Heimchen, you must not talk so.

MARIKKE. Yes, it is folly. It is pure folly. But never mind—Tonight is St. John's night. Look! The fire in front there—they had to put that out. But back there on the hill—there—there—Ah, how beautiful it looks and wild—

HAFFKE. And when you get to it, it's nothing but a pile of dirty boards.

MARIKKE. Oh shame!

HAFFKE. So it is with all that shines and is not the sun.

MARIKKE. You shall not say that. I will not allow it. I won't let my St. John's fire be found fault with. I will have my joy in it. Tonight—only tonight—then never again.

HAFFKE. (*Moved.*) Dear Heimchen, I know not what is within you. Nor will I try to find out. But in your struggle—I want you to know that a friend is beside you whom you can trust now and forever. Heimchen, I do not know how to say it; I would bear you in my arms forever. Heimchen, you would be well cared for with me.—

MARIKKE. Do you not know who I am?

HAFFKE. I know, I know.

MARIKKE. And who my mother is?

HAFFKE. I know all.

MARIKKE. Then how else am I to understand that—than—

HAFFKE. Heimchen, I should not have said it yet,—I know, it comes too soon, it should have developed first—it should slowly and secretly have—it was unbecoming in me, I know, but I fear for you—*I* have a fear, too, Heimchen!—I don't know who is to meet you at the train in Königsberg this morning!—But I want you to know then where you belong. I want you to know who you are and what your future is to be.

MARIKKE. (*Attempting to speak lightly, almost groaning.*) Oh—oh—oh—

HAFFKE. I won't ask for your answer now. I must

write to my father first, too. He mustn't feel that he's neglected because he's only a farmer.—Heimchen!

MARIKKE. (*Yielding without expression.*) That—may be—what—I—need.—Oh—oh! (*She allows herself to sink into a chair.*)

HAFFKE. What ails you? Do you want a glass of water? Do you want a glass of wine?

MARIKKE. Wine—from the bowl there—wine. (HAFFKE *brings it to her.*)

MARIKKE. Thank you. (*She drinks.*) No one ever brought me anything before.

HAFFKE. I will lay my heart at your feet.

MARIKKE. But no one is to know it before the wedding.

HAFFKE. But perhaps at the wedding. Perhaps during the ceremony, Papa could stand up and say, "We have another bridal pair in our midst." That would be a very nice way, Heimchen.

MARIKKE. No, no. I still have too much to do at the wedding. I have to see that everything goes off right at the table and that Trude comes through well.

HAFFKE. But then, when they are gone away?

MARIKKE. (*With great emphasis.*) When they are gone away—then, yes.

HAFFKE. (*Taking her hands.*) I thank you, Heimchen—I—

MARIKKE. (*Drawing back from him.*) Be still. (*Voices are heard outside. Trude comes in.*)

TRUDE. Oh, *here* you are, Your Reverence; we've been looking everywhere for you.

HAFFKE. I'll come out at once, my dear young lady.

TRUDE. Oh, we're all back again now—

HAFFKE. It's not possible. One is often delayed without knowing why himself. (*He goes out.*)

MARIKKE. (*Throwing her arms passionately around Trude.*) Do you love me, darling?

TRUDE. (*Dejectedly.*) Oh, *I* always love *you.*

MARIKKE. Why do you say it that way? I have done everything. I have done everything. You must love me now.

(VOGELREUTER, MRS. VOGELREUTER, HAFFKE *and* GEORG *come in.*)

VOGELREUTER. Well, well, my dear pastor,—a man does what he can, as the badger said to the porcupine, and he bit his snout till it bled. So better have something to drink and not excuse yourself so much. You're only making the matter worse.

HAFFKE. Do you know, I'm just going to hurry up and say "goodnight." Why, here I get nothing but teased.

VOGELREUTER. You get loved, you—

HAFFKE. Well, do you suppose that I don't feel that? And that I don't appreciate it? Or I'd have shown my teeth at you already.

VOGELREUTER. Come, give us a sight of them once.

HAFFKE. (*With a happy look at Marikke.*) Not I! —Good night. (*He shakes hands with all.*)

VOGELREUTER. (*To himself.*) Oh yes.

HAFFKE. Good night, Miss Heimchen.

MARIKKE. Good night, Your Reverence. (*They shake hands.*)

VOGELREUTER. (*To* GEORG *who has come a few steps forward and stands absorbed in thought.*) See him out, George.

GEORG. (*Rousing himself.*) All right, Uncle.

(HAFFKE *and* GEORG *go out.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Well, well, now I suppose we're soon to be left *all* alone, Henry.

VOGELREUTER. Too bad! But that's the way it goes, wife.—It's eleven o'clock. Up, up with you and into bed!

TRUDE. Good night, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. Good night, little Frousie! (*Tenderly.*) Little one, little one.

MARIKKE. Good night.

VOGELREUTER. Oh, that makes me think. When are you coming back?

MARIKKE. Tomorrow night at ten, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. And be reasonable, do you understand? Don't wear yourself out for nothing so you won't be any good for the wedding.

MARIKKE. No, no.

VOGELREUTER. Give me a kiss. (*She kisses him.*)

GEORG. (*Who has just stepped in.*) We have an hour and a quarter yet. I'll wait down here for you, Heimchen.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. You can keep each other company, children; then the time won't seem so long to either of you.

TRUDE. Oh me, too, can I?

VOGELREUTER. Haven't you got enough syrup on your tongue yet? You go to bed and sleep.

TRUDE. Well, good night, then.

MARIKKE. (*Stopping.*) I can't—stay down stairs either. I've got some things I want to ask you about, Mama.

GEORG. Then come down when it's time to go.

MARIKKE. Yes, I'll come then.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Good night, George dear.

GEORG. Good night, Aunt.

(MRS. VOGELREUTER, MARIKKE *and* TRUDE *go out.*)

VOGELREUTER. You know where the cigars are?

GEORG. Yes.

VOGELREUTER. And if you'll have another little drink from the bowl, I'll let the key hang a while.

GEORG. Thank you.

VOGELREUTER. See here, boy, is this sort of a style to go on between us?

GEORG. What sort of a style, my dear Uncle? If I have been disrespectful toward you in any way, I beg your pardon.

VOGELREUTER. Respect, bah! You can go black your boots with your respect. There! a puff—(*he puffs*) on your cursed respect.

GEORG. Well, then, what else?

VOGELREUTER. See here, perhaps I was wrong. It's not unlikely.

GEORG. Wrong? You? How so?

VOGELREUTER. Well, say, have you come out of a jar of preserves? Have you forgotten what was up between us yesterday?

GEORG. Why, my dear Uncle, that was all past in a minute.

VOGELREUTER. You're living fast, I must say.

GEORG. At any rate, don't lose any sleep over that. That bone is soon set. Then we'll—(*He starts and listens toward the door that leads outside.*)

VOGELREUTER. What's the matter?

GEORG. I thought someone was coming.

VOGELREUTER. Let them come.—Well, then it's all right; then good night, my son.

GEORG. Good night, my dear Uncle.

VOGELREUTER. (*Shaking his head.*) Hm! (*He goes out.*)

GEORG. (*He seats himself by the table and tries to read. Then he listens and goes toward the middle door, calling down into the garden.*) Is there anyone there? Did someone answer? (*In a lower tone.*) Is it you, Marikke?

TRUDE'S VOICE. (*Complainingly.*) No, it's only me.

GEORG. Trude! What are you doing there!

TRUDE. (*With her hair down and in her nightgown, steps in hesitatingly.*) I was so restless; I only wanted to see you a little while longer.

GEORG. But, child, what would Papa say? Go straight to your room.

TRUDE. I can't. I feel too bad.

GEORG. Why?

TRUDE. George dear, I'll tell you. I don't think I'm good enough for you.

GEORG. What?—what? What sort of nonsense is this?

TRUDE. I'm too stupid. I won't know what to talk to you about. I'm too stupid.

GEORG. Child, darling, little one.

TRUDE. But a little while ago in the garden, the moon shone so beautifully and you didn't say a single word to me.

GEORG. But Mama was there.

TRUDE. And if—George dear, there's still time—wouldn't you rather marry someone else?

GEORG. For heaven's sake—have you suggested that to anyone else?

TRUDE. Yes, to Papa. He thought I was crazy and told me to go way, I had the bride staggers.

GEORG. (*Smiling.*) Hm, hm!—And now I've got something to tell you, my treasure—

TRUDE. (*Interrupting.*) But if I'm going to make you miserable, I'd rather drown myself.

GEORG. First:—That it's not the proper thing for you to be running around here in your nightgown.

TRUDE. Why, in three days we'll be married.

GEORG. What a reason.—You have beautiful hair!

TRUDE. (*Blissfully.*) Do you like it?

GEORG. And secondly:—I will marry no one one else. You will not drown yourself. We will be happy together. At first you will be my companion in my leisure hours, and then perhaps, you will grow to be really my comrade. Is it good so?

TRUDE. Yes.

GEORG. And now go to bed.

TRUDE. And I will wrap myself all up in my hair and will think, you have said it is beautiful; and then I will fall asleep—Good night.

GEORG. Good night. (*He kisses her on the forehead. She goes out.* GEORG *reseats himself with a sigh and broods, his face buried in his hands.* MARIKKE *steps lightly in.*)

GEORG. Heimchen, Heimchen, is it you?

MARIKKE. It is still very early, isn't it?

GEORG. It must be an hour yet.—Are they all asleep?

MARIKKE. Yes, the lights were out everywhere.

GEORG. Well, come and sit here, will you?

MARIKKE. I don't know—I guess I'll go back.

GEORG. Come, come, you can read something. I'm reading too, you see.

MARIKKE. Well, all right then. (*She seats herself.*) But I'd really rather go to the train alone.

GEORG. (*Tenderly.*) Heimchen. (*She closes her eyes.*) Are you tired? (*She denies it.*) For one whole hour, I have you alone to myself.

MARIKKE. That's a great thing to have.

GEORG. Yes.

MARIKKE. The St. John's fires are all out, I suppose?

GEORG. How can they help it? Such a pile of wood is soon burnt down.

MARIKKE. And then everything is the same as ever again! Ah, how beautifully you spoke tonight! I have never heard anyone speak so before.

GEORG. And you were the only one who understood it.

MARIKKE. That is not strange. It seemed as if I spoke it myself. That is, I won't say—

GEORG. What won't you say?

MARIKKE. Oh, you know already.

GEORG. I know nothing.

MARIKKE. (*After a silence.*) George, I want to tell you something. It's what I came down here for.—You are to know it,—all alone—I promised to marry today, George.

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. Well, yes.

GEORG. With—?

MARIKKE. With the assistant pastor.—With whom else? There is no one else. Or did you think with Plötz?

GEORG. Why have you done this?

MARIKKE. (*Astonished.*) Well?

GEORG. Why have you done this?

MARIKKE. Why, one has his life before him, George. The St. John's fires can't burn forever, George.

GEORG. You can't do that. That's—that's simply—

MARIKKE. Don't talk so loud.

GEORG. You don't love him.

MARIKKE. You don't know whether I do or not.

GEORG. Don't I?—Well, yes, that may be so. Pardon me, of course, I don't know your secrets. Well then, I congratulate you.—

MARIKKE. And I thank you.

GEORG. But why did you tell *me* first? Why not Uncle or—I have no particularly intimate relations with you.—

MARIKKE. No? You really have no intimate relations with me? I thought you did!

GEORG. Well, each one of us has his destiny now,—you yours, I mine. We have made up our minds that there is to be nothing further between us. And now we can speak of the past. You have read my diary. Incidentally you have perjured yourself in regard to it. You think only of the great things at issue. With details you do not concern yourself. I wish that I might be so, too.—You know to whom my verses were addressed. It's not for us to play the innocent any longer. Therefore I ask you frankly: Why were you so mean to me at that time?

MARIKKE. Was I really that, George?

GEORG. Well, I don't want to drag out your register of

sins for you. But it seemed as if you had set yourself to drive me mad. Do you remember how I followed you down into the milk cellar one evening, and how you kept me shut up down there all night?—Do you remember it, you rascal, you?

MARIKKE. (*Smiling.*) Remember it. Remember it.

GEORG. Why did you do that?

MARIKKE. That is very simple. You were Mr. von Hartwig and I a Lithuanian foundling child—worse than that even.—When one of your standing followed such a one as me into the cellar, I knew for sure, or at least thought I knew what you wanted with me.

GEORG. And so that was it? And at that same time you used to go out under the manzanillo-tree and want to die?

(MARIKKE *nods.*)

GEORG. And so that was it? And did it never occur to you that it might be otherwise? Trude was still a child then. And afterwards, because I couldn't get you then, I took Trude. Did that never occur to you?

MARIKKE. How should I have dared to think of such a thing?

GEORG. And later, never—never—never?

MARIKKE. Day before yesterday, when I read your notebook, it occurred to me for the first time.

GEORG. And now it is too late.

MARIKKE. Now, of course, it is too late.—Oh, if I'd been then as I am today, there'd have been none of that restraint.

GEORG. Heimchen, do you know what you are saying?

MARIKKE. Ah, George dear, it's all the same. Each

one of us has his destiny. You must rule; I must serve; and both of us must die.

GEORG. You must be loved—loved—loved—with all one's soul—beyond all understanding.

MARIKKE. (*Motioning toward the right.*) *He* loves me.

GEORG. Hm, he.

MARIKKE. Don't scold, George dear. *You* can't love me. There can never be anything more between us.

GEORG. No. Never. No disaster can be brought on this house. Not by me. Nor by you. We would stifle under the shame of it.—But still, I can imagine to myself what might have been.—That is no disaster, is it?

MARIKKE. How was it you said that? The wild birds that we have left fly away, because our hands closed over them—how was it you said that now? That was so beautiful—

GEORG. I don't remember any more.—

MARIKKE. But I am no wild bird. I'm tame, quite tame.—

GEORG. You tame?

MARIKKE. For you, George dear, quite tame. I eat out of your hand.

GEORG. My little Marjell—my beloved. (*He strokes her hair.*) No, no, I had better not touch you. Trude was down in the garden a little while ago without anyone's knowing it. What if she should be slipping around there again—for heaven's sake.

MARIKKE. What did she want?

GEORG. What will she want?

MARIKKE. The poor dear, dear thing. Will you love her, too, George?

GEORG. I'll love her as well as I can. Only I dare not think of you then.

MARIKKE. Nor shall you think of me, George, dear. And I'll not think either.

GEORG. Really? Never?

MARIKKE. Yes, sometimes.—All the first days after the wedding—

GEORG. Never at any other time?

MARIKKE. St. John's night.

GEORG. And not when the fires are burning?

MARIKKE. And when the fires are out, then I'll cry a little.

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. You sit there, George, dear; I'll sit here. There can't be anyone in the garden.

GEORG. Oh, she must be asleep.

MARIKKE. If she were! But we will be brave. It doesn't matter to me. But I know what you're like—if you give yourself any license, it always weighs on you afterwards, and on me too.

GEORG. Why do you say that, Heimchen?—What do you take me for?

MARIKKE. Hard.

GEORG. And still you love me?

MARIKKE. For that very reason I love you.—You are so because you have had to struggle with life. I have had to struggle with life too, but I have only lost confidence in myself and in everything.—Ah, if you knew! Sometimes I am afraid of myself. Sometimes I could kill somebody. I am so lonely.

GEORG. You would have been happy with me.

MARIKKE. Oh.

GEORG. We would have worked together and spun plans half the night through. I am very ambitious, you must know.

MARIKKE. And I,—oh, I too! You shall be the first and the greatest, and all shall bow down before you, and I will kneel down before you and say: You love so to rule, rule now, I would have said: rule now. (*She kneels down before him, clasps his knees and looks at him.*)

GEORG. Stand up, for God's sake, stand up. There is surely someone in the garden.

MARIKKE. (*Standing up.*) Let it be who it will.

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. Yes, you are right. That was wrong in me —but what can you expect from anyone that comes from where I come from?

GEORG. Don't. Don't think about that. Only think about this house and all the love that you have had here.

MARIKKE. All is so still in the house. Not a sound in the whole world. Still,—like the grave.

GEORG. Be satisfied. Then they have buried us together.

MARIKKE. Oh, if they had.

GEORG. And see how the moon stands there over the garden. And there is your manzanillo-tree.

MARIKKE. Yes, do you see it?

GEORG. There—there! And the white leaves on it. Each one is alive, and not a stir of wind.—Come, shall we go out?

MARIKKE. (*Shuddering.*) Oh no! I think, beside, it's time—we *must.*

GEORG. Sh.

MARIKKE. What is it?

GEORG. Something made a noise.—That's Trude again. (*Calling.*) Trude!

MARIKKE. Weren't you mistaken?

GEORG. No, no. I saw a shadow too.—Trude!—You wait here a minute! (*He goes down into the garden.*)

MARIKKE. George, George dear,—I'm so afraid.—George!

(GEORG *comes back after a little while excited.*)

MARIKKE. Who was it?—George, who was it?

GEORG. No one, no one—

MARIKKE. Yes,—but I see it in your face—was it Trude?

GEORG. No.

MARIKKE. Was it Papa then?

GEORG. No, no.

MARIKKE. George, you're as pale as a ghost. What has happened? Tell me.

GEORG. Nothing has happened. There was a stranger walking about in the garden and I drove him out.

MARIKKE. What sort of a stranger?

GEORG. (*Annoyed.*) Oh, don't ask me.

MARIKKE. (*Without expression.*) Ah so—now I know. It was my mother. Yes, yes. I see it in your face.

GEORG. You have said it yourself.

MARIKKE. What did she want? But why do I ask? (*Burying her face in her hands.*) Oh God, oh God, oh God!

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. Close the shutters, I am afraid.—Tight. And the bars there in front. So. And there too. So, so.

GEORG. (*Putting his arms around her.*) Heimchen —beloved—

MARIKKE. Hold me fast.

GEORG. Is it good so?

MARIKKE. Yes, yes, it is good so. (*She presses against him.*) I will sit so—quite still. (*He kisses her.*)

GEORG. Only so we get to the train on time. (*He reaches for his watch. With a start.*) Hark! (*The far-off whistle of a locomotive is heard.*)

MARIKKE. (*Smiling.*) I hear. I hear.

GEORG. Was that the train?

MARIKKE. That was the train.

GEORG. Can you hear it clear here?

MARIKKE. In the night you can hear it.

GEORG. My God, what shall we do?

MARIKKE. (*In a low tone.*) I will tell you. We will stay here, quite still, quite still, till the next comes. It comes at four.

GEORG. Heimchen—my beloved, my all. (*He kisses her.*)

MARIKKE. Ah, kiss me again. Now do you see who I am? You see there's nothing for me to lose. I can do what I will. Tonight is St. John's night.

GEORG. The fires are burnt down.

MARIKKE. No, I will have them: they shall burn!

GEORG. Yes, they shall burn. A thousand times, yes, yes, yes.

MARIKKE. You! Don't kiss me! I will kiss you. I will take everything on myself. My mother stole. I steal too. —George!

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

[*The same scenery. The general stir of morning is heard. The center table is covered with flowers and presents. Through the glass doors* VOGELREUTER, GEORG, *and* TRUDE *are seen on the terrace, in the open door* MRS. VOGELREUTER. *All are listening to an invisible quartette of men's voices which, as the curtain rises, is singing the last measures of "This is the Day of the Lord." In the meantime,* MAMSELL *comes in from the left, also listens and wipes the tears from her eyes. When the singing ends,* VOGELREUTER *begins a conversation, and goes down the steps with* GEORG *and* TRUDE.]

MAMSELL. Oh, dear Mrs. Vogelreuter, can't you come out for just a minute?

MRS. VOGELREUTER. (*Wiping her eyes.*) What is it, Mamsell?

MAMSELL. Na, have your cry out first. It makes me cry, too.

(*The low clanging of a bell is heard.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. And now the bells are beginning.

MAMSELL. Na, such sadness.—It's more than a body can stand unless they're clean made of stone.

MRS. VOGELREUTER, Are you sure there's wine enough in the garden, and sandwiches?

MAMSELL. Lor' yes, Heimchen and I, we spread such a mountain of it.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. And what do you want now, Mamsell?

MAMSELL. Mercy me, only about the things in the kitchen. Heimchen thinks we'd better roast the venison a bit past the turn now, and then we can have it warm for dinner after a while: and I think: No; it doesn't taste so good so. And then Heimchen thinks—

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Well, never mind, I'll come out in a minute and see.

MAMSELL. And then there's another thing; dear good Mrs. Vogelreuter, *do* send the child, Heimchen I mean, out to rest up a bit. She's been on her legs since two o'clock and last night she came from Königsberg. It's more than a horse can stand.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Well, Mamsell, the wedding's to-day. We must all keep about today.

MAMSELL. Oh yes, you and me, we two old women, we don't amount to much anyway, but we must be a bit careful of the young folk. And she does keep gaping so.

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Well, I'll go out with you and see.

MAMSELL. No, and then beside, all this sadness! (*She wipes her eyes.*) Na, I say.

(*Both go out at the left.* VOGELREUTER, GEORG, *and* TRUDE.)

VOGELREUTER. Well, at last we're done with the morning's business. First the soldiers' club, then the athletes' club, then the old maids' club and now the singers'

club. But there's one good thing at least—that the athletes' club and the old maids' club didn't fix up a mixed performance for us, or by next year we'd have had a babies' club on our hands too.

TRUDE. Why, Papa!

VOGELREUTER. Come, come, don't carry on so. You're as good as a wife now. I'll tell you what, little Frousie, get me a drink of whiskey; my stomach's like a jelly-bag with that everlasting portwine.

TRUDE. Yes, Papa. (*She hurries to the liquor closet.*)

VOGELREUTER. (*To Georg.*) Well, and what's the matter with you now? Are you always swimming in this sort of a soft tear gravy—heh?

GEORG. Yes!

VOGELREUTER. (*Imitating him.*) Yes.—Well, it's more than I can do to see through you.—There's still—(*as* TRUDE *brings him the glass*) Will you have a drink, too?

GEORG. Thank you, no.

VOGELREUTER. Then don't. Your health, Frousie. (*He catches her by one of her curls.*)

TRUDE. Your health, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. Well, I suppose we've seen about the last of these curls now. Or are you going to be frizzled up like a poodle at the register's office?

TRUDE. No, of course not. Heimchen's going to fix it another way for me. We've been experimenting to see how it looked.

VOGELREUTER. (*Standing up.*) We start at half past nine—is it understood?

GEORG. Yes.

VOGELREUTER. And your friend from Königsberg, will we find him at the station?

GEORG. Yes. He gets in on the quarter past nine train.

VOGELREUTER. All right. And we must see sure to getting the second witness.—Do you know what I'd like? (*Tapping Georg on the breast.*) I'd like a peep in there.

TRUDE. Do let him alone, Papa. He's *my* George now. If *I'm* satisfied with him—

VOGELREUTER. Yes, yes, you're right. The man that gets my daughter can afford to laugh. But what's more, he's got to laugh: do you understand? (*He goes out by the door to the right.*)

TRUDE. You don't have to laugh unless you want to, George dear. Not for me. Hark! how the bells are ringing—low just like singing. That's for us.

GEORG. Why for us?

TRUDE. Alterchen had them rung especially for us, the assistant pastor said. Half an hour in the morning, and while we're on the way to the church in the afternoon, and at the exchanging of the rings.

GEORG. Hm, hm.

TRUDE. Do you know, George dear, Mama said whatever a bride dreams the night before her wedding, something like that is sure to come true. Do you believe that too?

GEORG. (*Absorbed. Absent-mindedly.*) Yes.

TRUDE. I dreamed about a yellow field of rape, where a poor little hare had gotten caught and a hawk hung right above it in the air and was after it. And then it seemed as if I was the hare myself, and I kept crying out:

George, George! And then the hawk swooped down on me, just think!

GEORG. And then?

TRUDE. And then I woke up. And the cold sweat was standing out all over my forehead. It's *not* true. You wouldn't let it be so. No one can hurt me, can they? I'm only a poor little scared hare, isn't that it?

GEORG. (*Staring in front of him.*) My God!

TRUDE. George dear, I want to ask you something.

GEORG. Well?

TRUDE. Don't you love someone else?

GEORG. (*Starting.*) What do you mean by asking *that* again?

TRUDE. When a bride, at least, can't laugh on her wedding day, then she always loves someone else.

GEORG. That's all nonsense, little one.

TRUDE. No, I read it somewhere.—But, George, listen—suppose I am so brave that I feel as if I could do anything in the whole world. I love you so. I'll love you so much, you'll soon forget her, you'll see.

GEORG. But child—what—?

TRUDE. No, no. I'm not at all angry with you, you see. Why should I be? Really I'm not. Nor at her either!—George dear, does she love you too?

GEORG. Who?

TRUDE. You know—but don't worry, George dear,—She'll forget it, too. Robert, the boy Papa took care of before, was going to put a bullet through his head because he couldn't have me. And now he's forgotten all about me. And I'll tell you; today when we're standing before the altar—when they say "Our Father who art in

heaven," I'll touch you with my hand and then we'll pray to God that she may overcome it.—There mustn't be anyone unhappy and—George, are you crying?

GEORG. I?—Of course not,—Why should I?

TRUDE. There *are* two tears—trickling down there—there—there—there. (*She wipes his face.*)

GEORG. Say—darling—what if we shouldn't be married after all?

TRUDE. How could that happen?

GEORG. Well—if I should die—or something—

TRUDE. (*Throwing her arms about him.*) Don't talk so—don't—don't!

(MARIKKE *appears at the left and remains standing motionless in the door way and watches the embrace.*)

GEORG. (*Becoming aware of her.*) Let loose.

TRUDE. Oh, it's only Heimchen.

MARIKKE. (*Slowly.*) You think a great deal of each other, I suppose?

TRUDE. We always think a great deal of each other. Or won't that do? Perhaps you don't allow us that?

MARIKKE. Oh, it's not for *me* to say.

TRUDE. (*In mock annoyance.*) How do you happen to be up here—you? Haven't you got anything to do in the kitchen?

MARIKKE. Mama sent me up.

TRUDE. Oh, Heimchen, love, then you can do up my hair to go to the register's office. Will you?

MARIKKE. Yes, I can do that.

TRUDE. Have you the hair pins?

MARIKKE. (*Shaking her head.*) I'll go and get some (*She staggers.*)

TRUDE. (*Petting her.*) You just can't do it; you're too tired; you can't.

MARIKKE. Oh, I'm not tired.

TRUDE. Well, all right then. (*She hurries out.*)

MARIKKE. (*Anxiously.*) Trude!

GEORG. I must speak to you.

MARIKKE. Well, speak, I'm here.

GEORG. You say that as if you hated me. Is *that* to be the end between us?

MARIKKE. That or something else; it's all the same.

GEORG. What sort of something else?

MARIKKE. Oh God, George, you have Trude. You were so tender to her just now; what do you want with me?

GEORG. I must speak to you.

MARIKKE. But you see there's no chance.

TRUDE. (*Coming in again.*) Here are the hair pins. (*She gives them to Marikke.*) And I brought Mama's powder mantle too. And the comb—So, now you must go out, George. You can see afterwards if it looks nice.

GEORG. (*With a glance at Marikke.*) I can stay here, too.

TRUDE. No, no. Or you'd make fun and then Heimchen would get embarrassed. And besides, it makes me embarrassed, too. Be nice, George, dear, go out into the garden. Won't you?

GEORG. Yes, all right. (*He goes out.*)

MARIKKE. Now bend over, please. (*She holds the powder mantle back of her.*)

TRUDE. Oh, I'll just throw it around me.

MARIKKE. Just as you like—Do you want the knot high or low?

TRUDE. But, Heimchen! You know we decided to have it high. Have you forgotten all about that?

MARIKKE. Pardon me! Dear, yes, pardon me.

TRUDE. Well, then give me a kiss.

(MARIKKE *takes her head in both hands with a sudden movement and stares at her.*)

TRUDE. (*Anxiously.*) You look at me so—strangely.

MARIKKE. (*Throwing her arms about her passionately.*) You—you—you.

TRUDE. Ow! You hurt me.

MARIKKE. (*Smiling.*) You don't me, I suppose?

TRUDE. I? How.

MARIKKE. (*Beginning to comb.*) I should think you could guess. You're getting married and I'm not. I'm jealous, of course.

TRUDE. (*Reaching behind and stroking her.*) Well, just wait, my love. (*She sings.*) "Next year, next year, when the nightingale sings."

MARIKKE. Well, what then, when the nightingale sings?

TRUDE. (*Singing on.*) Then you will the pastor's wife be.

(MARIKKE *with one braid in her hand, breaks out into shrill laughter, bending over backwards.*)

TRUDE. Ow! You pull! But you know,—I'm so sensitive there on the left side.

MARIKKE. Well, never mind. When a person's as happy as you are, they can stand a little hurt.—There, we'll braid that in with the rest. For you *are* happy, aren't you? Very?

TRUDE. Oh, I could be—I ought to be. But he is so sad.

MARIKKE. George?

(TRUDE *nods.*)

MARIKKE. Why is he?

TRUDE. Oh.

MARIKKE. (*Listening.*) Perhaps you were right. Perhaps he does love someone else.

TRUDE. (*With a little start.*) Oh, why do you say that?

MARIKKE. Because—No, no, no! How could he? That was mean in me—wasn't it? He couldn't have the heart to do that—not when he looked at you.

TRUDE. Still, still, still! I asked him about it—right out and out.

MARIKKE. (*Slowly.*) And what did *he* say?

TRUDE. Nothing. But afterwards he cried.

MARIKKE. He cried—George! Did you ever see him cry before?

TRUDE. No—never.

MARIKKE. (*To herself.*) He cried!

TRUDE. And afterwards he said: What if we shouldn't be married after all.

MARIKKE. *Who* not be married—you and he?

TRUDE. Yes. And what if he should die.

MARIKKE. If he should—so he said that.—(*With feigned buoyancy.*) Oh, he was only joking about that.

TRUDE. Of course. About that he was only joking. But about the other! Of course I pretended as if I didn't think there was anything to it: and in a minute it really seemed so. But when I think about it now. Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear! If *that* were so! If I could only know *that.*

MARIKKE. Naturally he wouldn't tell you.

TRUDE. Do you mean he'd tell someone else?

MARIKKE. Well, sooner than he would you?

TRUDE. Yes.

MARIKKE. Shall I ask him?

TRUDE. Oh, if you would, Heimchen, if you would—

MARIKKE. There, Now we're done. Take the comb quick. And here are the hair pins. And you go out.

TRUDE. Do you really think he'll tell you?

MARIKKE. Yes. You can be sure, he'll tell me.

TRUDE. Oh, Heimchen, how can I thank you, how—

MARIKKE. Run along. Run along. (*She pushes her out at the door.*)

MARIKKE. (*Alone, stretching herself.*) Oh, ho, hum. (*Calling.*) George! (*A knock is heard.*) Come in!

PLÖTZ. (*Coming in at the right.*) Oh, Miss Heimchen, Mr. Vogelreiter's not here?

MARIKKE. No, Mr. Plötz.

PLÖTZ. The assistant pastor wanted to speak to him. Here he is himself.

HAFFKE. Good morning, Miss Heimchen.

MARIKKE. Good morning. (*She extends her hand to him hesitatingly.*)

HAFFKE. I'll wait here, Mr. Plötz.

PLÖTZ. That's all right. And, please, Miss Heimchen, will you give me the key to the cellar door. That Bavarian beer must come up in a hurry. I want to lay it on the ice.

MARIKKE. (*Reaching him the key from the keyboard.*) Here it is.

PLÖTZ. Thank you. (*He goes out.*)

HAFFKE. Well, not a word to say?

MARIKKE. What shall I say, Your Reverence?

HAFFKE. Doesn't the day make you a little happier than usual?

MARIKKE. No.

HAFFKE. Nor the fact that we're to be engaged either?

MARIKKE. We're not going to be engaged, Your Reverence.

HAFFKE. (*Starting.*) What!

MARIKKE. I am not going to stay here at all.

HAFFKE. Really?

MARIKKE. I leave this house today.

HAFFKE. Permit me to ask, have I forced myself upon you or not?

MARIKKE. No, you have not forced yourself.

HAFFKE. Do you think I meant well by you or not?

MARIKKE. Well, Your Reverence. I thank you very much—but—

HAFFKE. Then *I* am not to blame that you are turning your back on this house?

MARIKKE. Certainly not.

HAFFKE. Does anyone know of this?

MARIKKE. No one.

HAFFKE. Is that so?—is that so?—Heimchen, I am still a very young man. If I should say any such word as *life's* happiness, very likely it would sound rather funny. So I will not speak of myself at all. I'll just have to wait and see how I come through it. And when I say to you now: Heimchen, have you made it clear to yourself how you are indebted to this house, then I say it not for my own sake nor for the sake of this house; I say it

for your sake alone.—Of course, I am only human and my heart—impels me—a little too—but aside from that, Heimchen,—if you bring any discord into this house, the discord will fall on you, not on this house, on you.

MARIKKE. That may be.

HAFFKE. Pardon me. I will ask no questions; I will make no effort to find out anything. That is always the best way. And if I did not love you as I do myself, I would not say another word to you. But now I say just one thing more, one that otherwise—in God's name—I would have said only to myself. The most beautiful, the highest thing that man has, is his melody. A certain melody that always sounds in him, that his soul always sings, in waking or dreaming, loud or low, consciously or unconsciously. The others say; "His way is so and so; his character is so and so." *He* only smiles at that, for his melody he alone knows. See, today you have shattered my life's happiness, but my life's melody, that you can not take from me, that is clear and will always be clear. But Heimchen, dear Heimchen, if you fill this house with sorrow, this house to which you owe everything in the world, if you sin against your father and your mother—

MARIKKE. My father and my mother? What does *Your Reverence* know of them? Who my father is, I don't know myself. But my mother, oh yes, I know her. It's from her I get the melody in my life. And there're words to it too, pretty ones. Do you know how they go? *Steal, must you.* Your happiness, that you must steal, love and all, that you must steal. But it will always be the other one who gets everything. Oh yes, my mother, you see, she steals. She climbed over the fence out there

on St. John's night. And as my mother does, so I after her. And now don't say another word. I need my five senses. My whole fate is at stake today. So. Now you know.

HAFFKE. Yes, now I know. Good-bye, Heimchen. I perhaps will overcome this day; you will not. (*He goes out.*)

TRUDE. (*At the door at the left.*) Was that George that went out just now?

MARIKKE. Were you standing by the door?

TRUDE. Why, shame on you!

MARIKKE. Go. Go dress yourself. I'll call George now. Go on.

TRUDE. And then will you come right away and tell me? Will you?

MARIKKE. Yes.

(TRUDE *goes out.*)

MARIKKE. (*Calling into the garden in a lower tone than before.*) George—George!

GEORG. (*Appearing from the terrace.*) Are you alone?

(MARIKKE *nods.*)

GEORG. Are you? And you have arranged it so?

MARIKKE. You wanted to speak to me and so I have arranged it.

GEORG. And if I say to you now, Heimchen, For one hour yet I am free; I still have full power to choose; I can still shape my destiny, what will you answer me?

MARIKKE. What can I answer you? I don't know what you want.

GEORG. If it comes to *wanting,* I want you. Don't you know it? You belong to me forever. I want you.

MARIKKE. (*In a low happy tone.*) I had thought when the fires were out, you would forget me, and now do you really want me?

GEORG. (*In a low tone.*) Are you not the same as my wife? Don't you know that before God you are my wife?

MARIKKE. Yes, and before men, Trude will be your wife.

GEORG. Do you think so?

MARIKKE. (*Doubtfully.*) Don't! You know you love her—Trude.

GEORG. Yes, I *do* love her. How could I help but love her? Don't you love her?

MARIKKE. I don't know. Since I saw how tender you were to her a little while ago—and it was only because you loved her so much that you were crying too. Yes, I see it now. But what I endure, how I—how I—Oh! —Well, thank God, that doesn't matter to anyone.

GEORG. Hm! That doesn't matter to me? You could do something better than to torture me like this. I might have been a decent sort of a man all my life. If I can't any more, there're still bullets enough.

MARIKKE. And so you really want to die?

GEORG. I don't want to. I've got to.

MARIKKE. Oh George, then take me with you.

(GEORG *shakes his head.*)

MARIKKE. Ah! that's what I was always imagining to myself then—years ago—I wanted to kill you then—and when you were dying, to kiss you like mad and then to kill myself.—

GEORG. That's nonsense, child. Don't talk of that. Don't. For don't you see that we keep turning round

in a sort of a circle—forever 'round and 'round, and finally we see no way out of it except death?

MARIKKE. Oh, I would like to die—but I'd much rather live with—

GEORG. Listen to me, Marjell. We both need more courage to live than to die.

MARIKKE. Why?

GEORG. Can you ask? In this house? That has raised us—you and me. That has given us food and knowledge and love. To wreck that and still be happy! Would you have the courage for that sort of a thing?

MARIKKE. Our Alterchen has always said, "We must have courage for all things, save only for unrighteousness." I'd have had courage for unrighteousness too.

GEORG. Shall I put you to the test?

MARIKKE. If you give me your hand now and say, "Come, let us go off through the garden door, just as we are, together, this minute," you'll soon see how I'll go.

GEORG. What! Without their knowing it? Without anyone—? Is that what you mean?

MARIKKE. Don't you?

GEORG. (*With a hard laugh.*) No.

MARIKKE. Well, what else then?

GEORG. Face to face. He stands there—I stand here. If he releases me from my promise, good. (*Setting his teeth.*) If he doesn't, good too.

MARIKKE. Oh God, oh God! You know what he is when he's mad. He'll kill us. I tell you, he'll kill us.

GEORG. It all comes to the same thing in the end.

MARIKKE. George, think.

GEORG. I have thought for two nights. The one is madness, the other is madness. Well, it's all the same. (*Painfully.*) Only I'm sorry for the child.

MARIKKE. And that's it. Well, if you're sorry for Trude.

GEORG. Then you are willing?

(MARIKKE *nods.*)

GEORG. It's a matter of life and death. You will keep up courage and stand by me?

MARIKKE. (*Confounded.*) When you tell him, have I got to—?

GEORG. What! You are willing to share your whole life with me—all the self-reproach—all the—and now, at this time, which comes a long way from being the worst hour we'll ever go through, you're going to leave me in the lurch?

MARIKKE. Not that. No, not that. But all of us here at home have always been so afraid of him, and now have I got to—?

GEORG. Well, if you can't do that much—

MARIKKE. If I have to! Yes, yes, I will, yes.

GEORG. Then watch out.—As soon as he comes back—(*Vogelreuter's voice is heard at the right. Breathing hard.*) Here he comes.

(VOGELREUTER *comes in.*)

VOGELREUTER. There's a clean Bible wonder for you! Just listen here, children—Isn't Trude here? Where's Trude, I say?—

MARIKKE. (*Trembling.*) I think she's dressing, Papa.

VOGELREUTER. Well, I guess it will interest you, too. I just met our young Haffke as he was coming out of the

house, and what did he do but tell me that, all of a sudden, Alterchen's up hobbling about the room and declares he'll perform the ceremony himself.—Well?—Doesn't that make any impression on you? Aren't you glad?

GEORG. Hm!

VOGELREUTER. Oh yes, you of course. You're a pagan.—But our young Haffke must have been priding himself on his speech; he was as yellow in the face as a cheese. All put out. Of course, it can't be helped.

GEORG. Pardon me, Uncle, since we have no time to lose, I must beg for an interview with you.

VOGELREUTER. Another already. Won't any time before noon do?

GEORG. No. It must be before we go to the register's office, if I may ask it.

VOGELREUTER. (*With a start.*) Heh?—(*Recollecting himself with a laugh.*) You want to screw the dowry up another notch, heh?—(*To Marikke.*) Well, you be ready to—

(PLÖTZ *enters.*)

VOGELREUTER. What do you want?

(PLÖTZ *makes signs to him.*)

VOGELREUTER. Look at him stand there, blinking his eyes like a sick rooster. Talk, can't you, you idiot.

PLÖTZ. No, I can't. I've got something to tell you in private.

VOGELREUTER. Well, if you've got something to tell me in private, then come in here, you old muttonhead.

PLÖTZ. I've just now got the old woman.

VOGELREUTER. The—(*With a side glance at Marikke.*)

(PLÖTZ *nods.*)

VOGELREUTER. You, Heimchen, you can go out and have a little conversation with George. It's a very interesting young man, that. (*In a low tone to Plotz.*) Where?

PLÖTZ. Down cellar. When I went to put the beer on ice, there she stood in a corner, loaded full.

VOGELREUTER. Is she there yet?

PLÖTZ. Sure.—She fights like the devil.

VOGELREUTER. If we can get her fast now, we'll be clear of her for a few years.—If we can only get her up stairs without anyone seeing her.

PLÖTZ. That's easy enough. We'll stop her mouth up.

VOGELREUTER. Then it'll take about a minute to swear out a warrant and there the police have her. Then we're clear of her.—Children, I've got to go out for a minute—be right back.

GEORG. Don't forget, Uncle.

VOGELREUTER. I told you once, I'd be right back. Come on, Plötz. (*They go out.*)

GEORG. What makes you tremble so?

MARIKKE. I'm not trembling.

GEORG. Heimchen, I'm with you. Nothing can happen to you.

MARIKKE. Hm! For that reason, I suppose.

GEORG. Of course, why not?

MARIKKE. It all comes upon me so now. (*Drawing herself up.*) Isn't he coming back?

(*Scraping and stamping are heard at the right and the half smothered cries of a woman's voice.*)

GEORG. What does that mean?

MARIKKE. For God's sake, listen!

THE VOICE OF THE WESZKALNENE. (*Calling for help.*) Little daughter, my little daughter,—Missie—Marikke!

MARIKKE. Hark!—Hark!—My mother—They're taking my mother away.—Be still—don't open the door! Quite still. (*The half smothered cries are renewed outside.*)

GEORG. Don't you want to go out? If you—

MARIKKE. How can I?—I—I'm—afraid.

GEORG. Shan't I?

MARIKKE. Stay here—stay here. Quite still—quite still—there—now they're gone. Thank God! (*Breaking out into a scream.*) Do you hear? Hark!—(*The low far-off screaming is heard again.*) Let her scream away; I can't help her—I'm as much of a thief as she is—I've broken into this house as much as she has, but what I've stolen from them—

GEORG. Heimchen. Beloved, come to yourself. Think what is before us.

MARIKKE. Yes—yes—yes. I'm all right now. Much better than before. Quite myself. What is before us then? No. No. I will not.—I cannot.—And I will not—I will not.

GEORG. Do you mean that you—

VOGELREUTER. (*Appearing at the door.*) Did you hear anything here, children? A racket or something of the kind?

GEORG. Yes, we heard screaming. What was the matter?

VOGELREUTER. Oh nothing. Don't bother yourselves about that. An old beggar woman—I've just got to make

but a little order, that's all. I'll be back in a minute, back in a minute. (*He goes out.*)

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. Be still. Don't say a word. She (*motioning outside*) must go her way. And I must go my way.

GEORG. What do you mean by that?

MARIKKE. You said yourself, it is madness. Yes, it *is* madness. All that we do or wish for—everything.

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. Do you suppose then we'd be happy together? I know you—I know how it will be—you will never forgive yourself and you will never forgive me, and in the end there will be nothing left for me but to die. That's all that will make a man of you again. Yes, that will be the end of it all.

GEORG. I see how it will end.—Heimchen, I belong to you, all that I am, all that I have, the good and the bad, all of me—you know that.

MARIKKE. Thank God, yes.

GEORG. If there were only a possibility, the merest shadow of a possibility of our getting out of this—circle, out of this—then we *would* be free, then we might—but now, no matter how we try, we can never get clear of our duty toward this house—never in our lives—never.

MARIKKE. Well then?—All that there was in the world for either of us, all love, all beauty, we have taken. There is nothing more; not for either of us. St. John's night is past; the fires are out, all out.

GEORG. And what is to come?

MARIKKE. Of you? I do not know. Perhaps you will be prosperous, perhaps not. That will depend on your-

self. And of me? Oh, I'll take care of myself, you can be sure. As soon as I can, I'll go away from here—not today, as I'd like to, that would—

GEORG. (*Interrupting.*) Away? Where to?

MARIKKE. How do I know? The world is wide. To Berlin. Away off. Where no one will find me—not even my George.

GEORG. And what of me if you should die there?

MARIKKE. You needn't be afraid of that. I am a famine child; I have callouses on my fingers; see here! And a hard heart. I'll work till I can't stand. And then I'll sleep till the work begins again. And so we come through it all.

GEORG. Famine child, you say. You know I am one, too. But the reckoning is not fair between us. You are going into misery and it's my fault. And if I did not love you as I do, it would haunt me, my life would—but—for the very reason that we are both famine children, now we will set our teeth together, reach each other our hard hands and say, good-bye.

MARIKKE. (*In a low tone.*) Good-bye, George.—And —and—never mind, he's not coming yet—and forgive me, from today—you know! If I had not loved you so much, it would have been easier for me. But now as it is, it is good. I know that now I can never be wholly poor again. For the St. John's fires have burned once for me too. One night. Once.

GEORG. Heimchen!

MARIKKE. (*Listening.*) Don't. Don't.

(MRS. VOGELREUTER *and* TRUDE *come in.*)

MRS. VOGELREUTER. Hasn't the carriage come yet,

children? And what can Papa be thinking about. It's time to go.

MARIKKE. I think he's coming now, Mama.

VOGELREUTER. (*Coming in.*) Now forwards, forwards, forwards! Oh I forgot, you wanted to speak with me first.

GEORG. (*With a glance at Marikke.*) Thank you. It is unnecessary.

VOGELREUTER. Well then, quick. My coat, my coat, my coat. (*He throws off his jacket, and puts on a black coat which* MRS. VOGELREUTER *has brought him.*)

TRUDE. (*To Marikke.*) Well, did you ask him?

(MARIKKE *nods.*)

TRUDE. And what—?

MARIKKE. It was all nonsense, dear. He just loves you. He never has loved anyone else, he says. And he —will be—very happy, he says.

TRUDE. (*Exultantly.*) George dear! (*She throws her arms about him.*)

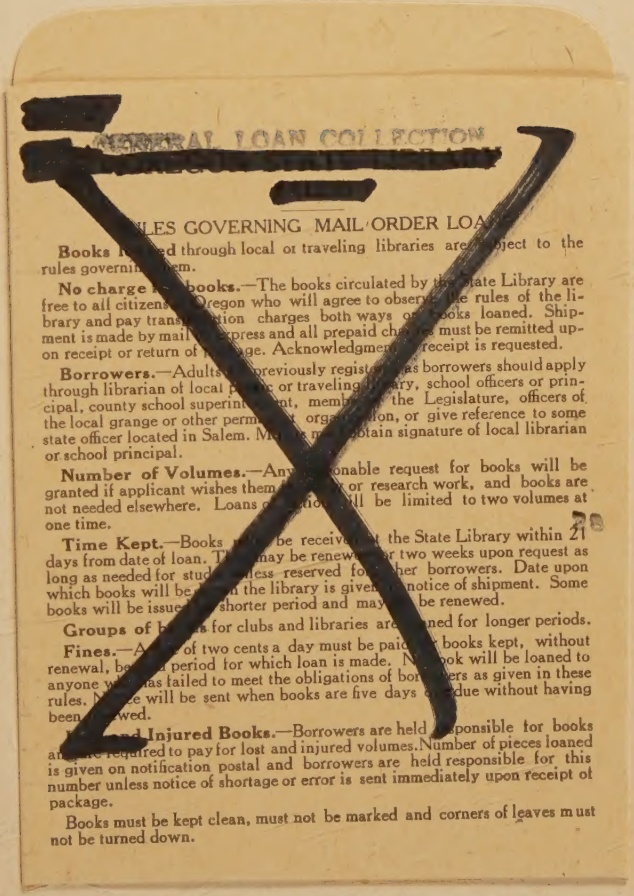
VOGELREUTER. Come, come. What does this mean? Time enough to make love afterwards. Out, out, out!

(ALL *move toward the door,* GEORG *looking around, is forced out by* VOGELREUTER. *Only* MARIKKE *remains standing at the left, her handkerchief between her teeth, and looks after them.*)

CURTAIN.

DATE DUE

PT 2640 .Z3 J65
Sudermann, Hermann, 1857-
1928.
St. John's fire



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